



ICON ART AND MEANING IN AEGEAN SEAL IMAGES

Janice L. Crowley

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ICON



In the Herakleion Museum, looking into the cases of seals and signets.
 “Why are there so many?” “What do they all mean?”

ICON

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JANICE L CROWLEY

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.



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The electronic open access version of this work is permanently available at <https://www.propylaeum.de>
urn: urn:nbn:de:bsz:16-propylaeum-ebook-1342-0
doi: <https://doi.org/10.11588/propylaeum.1342>

Published by
Heidelberg University / Heidelberg University Library, 2024
Propylaeum – Specialized Information Service Classics
Grabengasse 1, 69117 Heidelberg, Germany
<https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/en/imprint>

Text © 2024, Janice L Crowley
Editing: Jabiru Publishing, Cairns
Layout: Nettie O Design, Cairns

Cover illustration: Gold Signet Ring, Minoan, c.1500 BCE, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, Bezel 2.27 cm × 1.35 cm

ISBN 978-3-96929-287-7 (Hardcover)
ISBN 978-3-96929-286-0 (PDF)

To the Aegean Seal Artists and to

Ingo Pini

who has opened their world to us all.

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Preface

This book, or the idea of it, has been my constant companion for some decades and I am indebted to many who have helped in its shaping. During this long journey I have been sustained by the intrinsic beauty of the material and the encouragement of my colleagues on three continents.

The only place to begin to express my appreciation for this help is to thank Ingo Pini without whose work we would not be able to access the seals so readily and to whom this book is dedicated. Ingo Pini has been the driving force of the CMS throughout most of its existence and he has left to us a priceless record of the seals. For me, the days spent in the Great Room of the seal impressions in Marburg are as precious a memory as the wide-ranging conversations on the balcony beside the red beech and the many spirited arguments which we enjoyed and which I still miss.

The CMS staff over many years hosted me on my visits to Marburg, first at the Steinweg premises and then at Schwanalle. Walter Müller followed Ingo Pini as Director and always made me welcome right through to my participation in the splendid Symposium he organised to celebrate the 50th Jubilee of the CMS. To have had the opportunity to work and research at the *Arbeitsstelle* has been a privilege, and for all of us who have known this great centre of scholarship, there is a sadness that the Marburg era is over. Diamantis Panagiotopoulos became the Director on the move to Heidelberg. He has welcomed me to the new CMS centre and I thank him for his continuing interest in my work.

When I began my forays into setting up a database for seal iconography there were not yet any commercially available database shells. My friend and colleague in Hobart, Tony Adams, taught me about hierarchical classifications and interrogating databases and I remain grateful for this early help and for easing my novice self into the expanding world of computer programming. At the genesis of the project, John Boardman, who was then also creating a large database, kindly took time to share his experiences with me and encouraged me to persevere. Once the FileMaker Pro program was selected, I set about customising my Databases and then it was time for trials. I thank Robert Laffineur, Gisela Walberg, Jean-Claude Poursat and Michael Wedde for testing, and improving, the prototypes. The IconAegean Databases and the IconAegean Vocabulary, now in updated versions, are integral to my research.

As I reflect on beginning my research into the seals, I remember fondly the scholars who are no longer with us. I think of Emily Vermeule who examined my PhD thesis, of Homer and Dorothy Thompson who first invited me to come to Greece and of Henri and Micheline van Effenterre who always asked such searching questions. Paul Astrom, Nicolas Coldstream and Agnes Sakellariou were ever encouraging and discussions with Klaus Kilian were seminal to my evolving Bronze Age consciousness. The time shared with these eminent scholars, together with their friendship and support, leaves me with a debt I can never repay.

So many sites to visit in Greece and Crete and so many people to thank for their assistance over the years! So much iconography to discuss and even more people to thank for the time they set aside to talk with me! I am deeply indebted to Christos Doumas for his support and friendship over the years. The time I have been able to spend at Acrotiri is amongst my favourite memories as are shared conversations in Athens and Australia. Philip Betancourt and Tom Brogan have made east Crete seem like home. Joseph Maran has always found time for discussion on my visits to Heidelberg while Jack Davis and Shari Stocker are always available to consult over Pylos. Wolf and Barbara Niemeier have ever been the

consummate tour guides on site, spirited companions at conferences and always the most convivial of friends.

Where now do I begin to list the conversations round the world which have shaped my thinking about iconography and archaeology? Certainly I must thank again the Aegeanists mentioned above and my friends and colleagues in Australia. For discussions in Marburg and at many conferences I thank Judith Weingarten and John Younger and especially Olga Krzyszkowska for sharing her great knowledge of the seals. With Cynthia Shelmerdine and Nanno Marinatos there was always too little time to pursue all the ideas we wished. At the New York Aegean Bronze Age Colloquium Günter Koepcke and Robert Koehl have been the perfect hosts.

My correspondent friends, in this time of Covid, have made it possible to bear the absence of meeting in person. Fritz Blakolmer always has an answer to my questions and I do thank him for his cheer and for sharing his command of the iconographic sphere. Andreas Vlacopoulos has taken me further into artistic subtleties by expanding my understanding of the links with fresco. Malcolm Wiener writes of chronology though I am always glad when he turns to other topics with his encyclopaedic knowledge of the Aegean Bronze Age. Karen Foster writes from the snow of Connecticut to connect with tropical Australia and always with a wise word. Lyvia Morgan has long shared a deep love of iconographic enquiry with me and we both have been sorry that the tyranny of geography has not allowed closer collaboration. Where would I be without Tom Palaima to keep me informed of the advances in Linear B and counselled on their nuances? Then, if I have begun to stray too far from the seals, Maria Anastasiadou is always ready with a positive view of our research.

Various groups and institutions have provided assistance over the years. Financial support has been given by the Australian Federation of University Women and an anonymous donor. In 1994 the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut hosted my visit to Berlin for work in the collections and libraries. In 2000 the Institute for Aegean Prehistory provided a Research Grant for a lengthy visit to CMS at a crucial time in the development of the Databases. In 2011 the University of Cincinnati Margo Tytus Visiting Fellowship allowed an extended time at the Carl Blegen Library and a most rewarding and enjoyable research visit to the Classics Department. For many years now my professional home in Australia and in Greece has been the Australian Archaeological Institute at Athens and I thank the Directors, Alexander Cambitoglou and Stavros Paspalas, for their unfailing support. The members of the Institute's Tasmanian Friends Association have ever provided local outreach and great friendship.

My thanks are also due to the many groups and individuals who have assisted me with their professional expertise. For help with publishing my monographs I thank the staff of SIMA Göteborg, Aegaeum Liege and Propylaeum Heidelberg. Benjamin Huber in Vienna has been my researcher for bibliographical detail. Museum Staff in so many cities and towns have enlivened my days of peering into display cabinets and sometimes have been able to permit me to handle their finest seals. I recall particularly my research at the Cabinet des Médailles, the Ashmolean and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. A special thanks must go to the Museum curators and guards all over Greece who have helped me to appreciate the precious material in their care. Many a hot Aegean day has been ameliorated by coming into the cool rooms of a Museum building to be greeted by the interest and enthusiasm of the staff.

In acknowledging this broad indebtedness, I nevertheless must take responsibility for any omissions or mistakes in the book. My work has, for the most part, been like a meditation alone, witnessed and supported by my friends and family. To my children, Helen and Michael, and to our extended family, I must say how appreciative I am for you finding time in your own busy lives to ask about my research. To my husband Jeff, I cannot find words enough to thank you. For so long you have spliced your life between being an engineer at work and an honorary Aegeanist, to my very great advantage.

*Janice L Crowley
Palm Cove, Australia
November 2023*

Acknowledgements

CMS

All black and white photographs of the CMS seals and all black and white drawings of the CMS seal images by kind permission of successive CMS Directors, Professor Dr Ingo Pini, Dr Walter Müller and Professor Dr Diamantis Panagiotopoulos

Ingo Pini

All colour photographs of the CMS seals except for those acknowledged below by kind permission of Professor Dr Ingo Pini

National Archaeological Museum, Athens

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amethyst discoid Inv. Nr. 8708 published as CMS I 5

agate lentoid Inv. Nr. 8718 published as CMS I 167

agate lentoid Inv. Nr. 7332 published as CMS I 185

jasper lentoid Inv. Nr. 1761 published as CMS I 223

Agora Museum, Athens

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gold signet ring Inv. Nr. J5 published as CMS V 173

Archaeological Museum, Herakleion

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gold signet ring Inv. Nr. XA-1700 Minos Ring

gold signet ring Inv. Nr. X-1030 Sellopoulo Ring

Staatliche Museen, Berlin

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carnelian seal Inv. Nr. FG2 published as CMS XI 26

gold signet Inv. Nr. Misc. 11886 published as CMS XI 29

Department of Classics University of Cincinnati, Courtesy of the Palace of Nestor Excavations

Pylos, Seals from the Griffin Warrior Grave

Davis, Jack L. and Sharon R. Stocker. 2016. "The Lord of the Gold Rings: The Griffin Warrior of Pylos". *Hesperia* 85.4. p. 627-655.

Drawings T. Ross, photographs J. Vanderpool

Figs. 9a and 9b: Ring 1 (bull-leaper)

Figs. 10a and 10b: Ring 2 (shrine scene)

Figs. 11a and 11 b: Ring 3 (woman with staff and birds)

Figs 12a and 12b: Ring 4 (seated woman)

Acknowledgements

Stocker, Sharon R. and Jack L. Davis. 2017. "The Combat Agate from the Grave of the Griffin Warrior at Pylos". *Hesperia* 86.4. p. 583-605.

Impression K. Hall, drawing T. Ross, photograph J. Vanderpool

Combat Agate: Fig. 3 impression, Fig. 9 enhanced photograph, Fig 10 enlarged drawing

Stocker, Sharon R. and Jack L. Davis 2020. "An Early Mycenaean Wanax at Pylos? On Genii and Sun-Disks from the Grave of the Griffin Warrior". pp. 293-299 in *CANP*.

Impression K. Hall, drawing T. Ross, photograph J. Vanderpool

Agate lentoid sealstone (SN24–105): Fig 1a. photograph, Fig. 2 drawing, Fig. 3 photograph

Author

Photographs: Frontispiece and Endpiece

Line drawings of the impressions:

gold signet, Minos Ring as above

gold signet, Sellopoulo Ring as above

gold signet, Runner Ring, Archaeological Museum Herakleion, HM 1699

gold signet, Poros Ring, Fig. 14 RM

gold signet, Archanes Griffin Ring, Fig 13 RM

gold signet, Archanes Cult Ring, Fig.19 RM

Kneeler Lentoid, Archaeological Museum Herakleion, HMS 2815b

Rower Cushion, Archaeological Museum Herakleion, HMS 2752

Abbreviations

Publications of the Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel (CMS)

CMS	<i>Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel.</i>
CMS I	A. Sakellariou (ed.), 1964. <i>Die minoischen und mykenischen Siegel des National museums in Athen.</i>
CMS IS	J. A. Sakellarakis (ed.), 1982. <i>Athen, Nationalmuseum.</i>
CMS II.1	N. Platon (ed.), 1969. <i>Iraklion Archäologisches Museum. Die Siegel der Vorpalastzeit.</i>
CMS II.2	N. Platon, I. Pini, and G. Salies (eds.), 1977. <i>Iraklion Archäologisches Museum. Die Siegel der Altpalastzeit.</i>
CMS II.3	N. Platon and I. Pini (eds.), 1984. <i>Iraklion Archäologisches Museum. Die Siegel der Neupalastzeit.</i>
CMS II.4	N. Platon and I. Pini (eds.), 1985. <i>Iraklion Archäologisches Museum. A: Die Siegel der Nachpalastzeit. B: Undatierbare spätminoische Siegel.</i>
CMS II.5	I. Pini (ed.), 1970. <i>Iraklion Archäologisches Museum. Die Siegelabdrücke von Phästos.</i>
CMS II.6	W. Müller and I. Pini (eds.), 1999. <i>Iraklion Archäologisches Museum. Die Siegelabdrücke von Aj. Triada und anderen zentral- und ostkretischen Fundorten unter Einbeziehung von Funden aus anderen Museen.</i>
CMS II.7	W. Müller and I. Pini (eds.), 1998. <i>Iraklion Archäologisches Museum. Die Siegelabdrücke von Kato Zakros unter Einbeziehung von Funden aus Anderen Museen.</i>
CMS II.8	M.A.V. Gill, W. Müller and I. Pini (eds.), 2002. <i>Iraklion Archäologisches Museum. Die Siegelabdrücke von Knossos unter Einbeziehung von Funden aus anderen Museen.</i>
CMS III	W. Müller and I. Pini (eds.), 2007. <i>Iraklion Archäologisches Museum. Sammlung Giamalakis.</i>
CMS IV	J.A.Sakellarakis and V.E.G. Kenna (eds.), 1969. <i>Iraklion, Sammlung Metaxas.</i>
CMS V	I. Pini et al. (eds.), 1975-1976. <i>Kleinere griechische Sammlungen. Ägina–Delphi, Delphi–Volos.</i>
CMS VS 1A	I. Pini et. al. (eds.), 1992. <i>Kleinere griechische Sammlungen. Ägina–Korinth.</i>
CMS VS 1B	I. Pini et. al. (eds.), 1993. <i>Kleinere griechische Sammlungen. Lamia – Zakynthos und weitere Länder des Ostmittellmeerraums.</i>
CMS VS 2	P. Dakoronia, S. Deger-Jalkotzy and A. Sakellariou (eds.), 1996. <i>Die Siegel aus der Nekropole von Elatia-Alonaki.</i>
CMS VS 3	I. Pini et. al. (eds.), 2004. <i>Neufunde aus Griechenland und der Westlichen Türkei.</i>
CMS VI	H. Hughes-Brock and J. Boardman (eds.), 2009. <i>Die englischen Museen I. Oxford, The Ashmolean Museum.</i>
CMS VII	V.E.G.Kenna (ed.), 1967. <i>Die englischen Museen II. London, British Museum – Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum – Manchester, University Museum – Liverpool, City Museum – Birmingham, City Museum.</i>
CMS VIII	V.E.G.Kenna (ed.), 1966. <i>Die englischen Privatsammlungen.</i>
CMS IX	H. and M. van Effenterre (eds.), 1972. <i>Cabinet des Médailles de la Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.</i>
CMS X	J.H. Betts (ed.), 1980. <i>Die Schweizer Sammlungen.</i>
CMS XI	I. Pini et al. (eds.) 1988. <i>Kleinere Europäische Sammlungen.</i>
CMS XII	V.E.G. Kenna (ed.), 1972. <i>Nordamerika I. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.</i>
CMS XIII	V.E.G. Kenna and E. Thomas (eds.), 1974. <i>Nordamerika II. Kleinere Sammlungen.</i>
CMS B0	F. Matz (ed.), 1974. <i>Die kretisch-mykenische Glyptik und ihre gegenwärtigen Probleme.</i>

Abbreviations

CMS B1	W-D. Niemeier (ed.), 1981. <i>Studien zur minoischen und helladischen Glyptik. Beiträge zum 2. Marburger Siegel-Symposium</i> , 26.-30. September 1978.
CMS B2	A. Onassoglou, 1985. <i>Die >talmanischen< Siegel</i> .
CMS B3	W. Müller (ed.), 1989. <i>Fragen und Probleme der bronzzeitlichen ägäischen Glyptik. Beiträge zum 3. Internationalen Marburger Siegel-Symposium</i> , 5.-7. September 1985.
CMS B4	J.G. Younger, 1991. <i>A Bibliography for Aegean Glyptic in the Bronze Age</i> .
CMS B5	W. Müller (ed.), 1995. <i>Sceaux Minoens et Mycéniens. IV^e symposium international</i> , 10-12 septembre 1992, Clermont-Ferrand.
CMS B6	W. Müller (ed.), 2000. <i>Minoisch-Mykenische Glyptik. Stil, Ikonographie, Funktion. V. Internationales Siegel-Symposium, Marburg</i> , 23.-25. September 1999.
CMS B7	J. Aruz, 2008. <i>Marks of Distinction. Seals and Cultural Exchange between the Aegean and the Orient</i> .
CMS B8	W. Müller (ed.), 2010. <i>Die Bedeutung der minoischen und mykenischen Glyptik. VI. Internationales Siegel-Symposium aus Anlass des 50 jährigen Bestehens des CMS, Marburg</i> , 9.-12. October 2008.
CMS B9	M. Anastasiadou, 2011. <i>The Middle Minoan Three-Sided Soft Stone Prism. A Study of Style and Iconography</i> .
CMS B10	A. Karnava, 2018. <i>Seals, Sealings and Seal Impressions from Akrotiri in Thera</i> .

Publications of Conferences in the Aegaeum Series

Aegaeum	<i>Annales d'archéologie égéenne de l'Université de Liege et University of Texas at Austin Program in Aegean Scripts and Prehistory</i> .
AO	E. Cline and D. Harris-Cline (eds.), 1998. <i>The Aegean and the Orient in the Second Millennium. Proceedings of the 50th Anniversary Symposium, Cincinnati</i> , 18-20 April, 1997, Aegaeum 18.
ASSA	T. Palaima (ed.), 1990. <i>Aegean Seals, Sealings and Administration. Proceedings of the NEH- Dickson Conference of the Program in Aegean Scripts and Prehistory of the Department of Classics, University of Texas at Austin</i> , January 11-13, 1989, Aegaeum 5.
DAIS	L. Hitchcock, R. Laffineur and J. Crowley (eds.), 2008. <i>DAIS. The Aegean Feast. Proceedings of the 12th International Aegean Conference, University of Melbourne, Centre for Classics and Archaeology</i> , 25-29 March 2008, Aegaeum 29.
EIKON	R. Laffineur and J. L. Crowley (eds.), 1992. <i>EIKON. Aegean Bronze Age Iconography: Shaping a Methodology. Proceedings of the 4th International Aegean Conference, University of Tasmania, Hobart, Australia</i> , 6-9 April 1992, Aegaeum 8.
EMPORIA	R. Laffineur and E. Greco (eds.), 2005. <i>EMPORIA. Aegeans in the Central and Eastern Mediterranean. Proceedings of the 10th International Aegean Conference, Italian School of Archaeology in Athens</i> , 14-18 April, 2004, Aegaeum 25.
EPOS	S. P. Morris and R. Laffineur (eds.), 2007. <i>Reconsidering Greek Epic and Bronze Age Archaeology. Proceedings of the 11th International Aegean Conference, Los Angeles UCLA- The J. Paul Getty Villa</i> 20-23 April, 2006, Aegaeum 28.
HESPEROS	M. Fotiadis, R. Laffineur, Y. Lolos and A. Vlachopoulos (eds.), 2017. <i>ΕΣΤΙΕΠΟΣ/HESPEROS: The Aegean seen from the West: proceedings of the 16th International Aegean Conference, University of Ioannina, Department of History and Archaeology</i> , 18-21 May 2016, Aegaeum 41.

Abbreviations

KOSMOS	M-L. Nosch and R. Laffineur (eds), 2012. <i>KOSMOS. Jewellery, Adornment and Textiles in the Aegean Bronze Age, Proceedings of the 13th International Aegean Conference, University of Copenhagen, Danish National Research Foundation's Centre for Textile Research, 21-26 April 2010</i> , Aegaeum 33.
METAPHYSIS	E. Alram-Stern, F. Blakolmer, S. Deger-Jalkotzy, R. Laffineur and J. Weilharter (eds.), 2016. <i>METAPHYSIS: Ritual, Myth and Symbolism in the Aegean Bronze Age: Proceedings of the 15th International Aegean Conference, Vienna, Institute for Oriental and European Archaeology, Aegean and Anatolia Department, Austrian Academy of Sciences and Institute of Classical Archaeology, University of Vienna, 22 - 25 April 2014</i> , Aegaeum 39.
METRON	K. Polinger Foster and R. Laffineur (eds.), 2003. <i>METRON. Measuring the Aegean Bronze Age. Proceedings of the 8th International Aegean Conference, Yale University, 18-21 April 2002</i> , Aegaeum 23.
MNEME	E. Borgna, I. Caloi, F. M. Carinci and R. Laffineur (eds.), 2019. <i>MNEMH / MNEME: Past and Memory in the Aegean Bronze Age: Proceedings of the 17th International Aegean Conference, University of Udine, Department of Humanities and Cultural Heritage, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Department of Humanities, 17-21 April 2018</i> , Aegaeum 43.
PHYSIS	G. Touchais, R. Laffineur et E. Rougemont (eds.), 2014. <i>PHYSIS, L'environnement naturel et la relation homme-milieu dans le monde égéen protohistorique. Actes de la 14e Rencontre égéenne internationale, Paris, Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art (INHA), 11-14 décembre 2012</i> . Aegaeum 37.
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POLITEIA	R. Laffineur and W-D. Niemeier (eds.), 1995. <i>POLITEIA. Society and State in the Aegean Bronze Age. Proceedings of the 5th International Conference, University of Heidelberg, Archäologisches Institut, 10-13 April 1994</i> , Aegaeum 12.
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ZOIA	R. Laffineur and T. Palaima (eds.), 2021. <i>ZOIA. Animal-Human Interactions in the Aegean Middle and late Bronze Age. Proceedings of the 18th International Aegean Conference, originally to be held at the Program in Aegean Scripts and Prehistory, in the Department of Classics, the University of Texas at Austin, May 28-31, 2020</i> , Aegaeum 45.

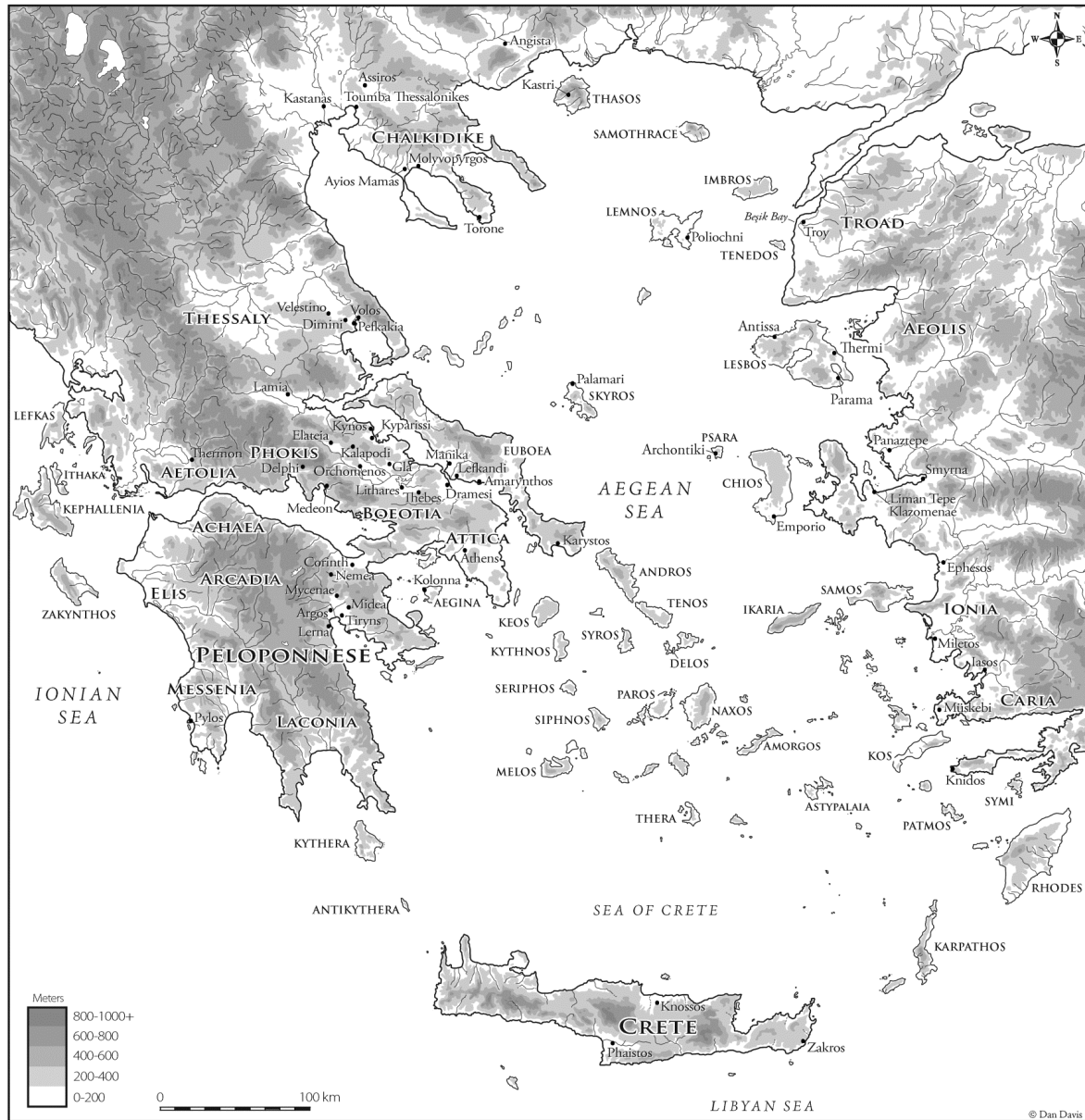
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- CCABA C. W. Shelmerdine (ed.), 2008. *The Cambridge Companion to the Aegean Bronze Age.*
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- FLL Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation (USA), 2008. *From the Land of the Labyrinth. Minoan Crete, 3000-1100 B.C.*
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- Gifts T. Linders and G. Nordquist (eds.), 1987. *Gifts to the Gods. Proceedings of the Uppsala Symposium, 1985*, Boreas 15.
- HEP P. Darque and R. Treuil (eds.), 1990. *L'Habitat Égéen Préhistorique, Actes de la table ronde internationale, Athenes, 23-25 juin 1987*, BCH Supplément XI.
- IAS J. L. Crowley, 2013. *The Iconography of Aegean Seals*, Aegaeum 34.
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- MT R. Hagg and N. Marinatos (eds.), 1984. *Minoan Thalassocracy. Myth and Reality. Proceedings of the Third International Symposium at the Swedish Institute at Athens, 31 May-5 June 1982*, Skrifter Utgivna av Svenska Institutet i Athen, XXXII.
- MWPIC H. Breccoulaki, J. L. Davis and S. R. Stocker (eds.), 2015. *Mycenaean Wall Painting in Context: new Discoveries, old Finds reconsidered: Proceedings of an international Workshop held February 10-11, 2011 at the National Hellenic Research Foundation*, Meletēmata 72.
- NI F. Lang, C. Reinholdt and J. Weilhartner (eds.), 2007. *STEFANOS ARISTEIOS. Archäologische Forschungen zwischen Nil und Istros. Festschrift für Stefan Hiller zum 65. Geburtstag.*

Abbreviations

NM	M. Andronicus, 1975. <i>National Museum in the Series Greek Museums</i> .
OHBA	E. H. Cline (ed.), 2010. <i>The Oxford Handbook of the Bronze Age Aegean</i> .
OHCG	<i>Aux Origines de l'Hellénisme. La Crète et la Grèce. Hommage à Henri van Effenterre</i> , Publications de la Sorbonne Histoire Ancienne et Médiévale 15.
Paintbrushes	A. Vlachopoulos (ed.), 2018. <i>ΧΡΩΣΤΗΡΕΣ/Paintbrushes: Wall-Painting and Vase-Painting of the second Millennium BC in Dialogue: Proceedings of the International Conference on Aegean Iconography held at Akrotiri, Thera, 24-26 May 2013</i> .
PM	A. J. Evans. 1921-1935. <i>The Palace of Minos at Knossos I-IV</i> .
PN I	C. W. Blegen and M. Rawson, 1966. <i>The Palace of Nestor at Pylos in Western Messenia I: The Buildings and their Contents</i> .
PN II	M. Lang, 1969. <i>The Palace of Nestor at Pylos in Western Messenia II: The Frescoes</i> .
PN III	C. W. Blegen et al., 1973. <i>The Palace of Nestor at Pylos in Western Messenia III: Acropolis and Lower Town. Tholoi, Grave Circle, and Chamber Tombs. Discoveries outside the Citadel</i> .
RM	N. Dimopoulou and G. Rethemiotakis, 2004. <i>The Ring of Minos and Gold Minoan Rings: The Epiphany Cycle</i> .
SC	R. Hagg and N. Marinatos (eds.), 1981. <i>Sanctuaries and Cults in the Aegean Bronze Age. Proceedings of the First International Symposium at the Swedish Institute in Athens, 12-13 May 1980</i> , Skrifter Utgivna av Svenska Institutet i Athen, 4, XXVIII.
TAW II	C. Doumas (ed.), 1978. <i>Thera and the Aegean World: Papers Presented at the Second International Scientific Congress, Santorini, Greece, August, 1978</i> .
TAW III	D. A. Hardy et al. (eds.), 1990. <i>Thera and the Aegean World III: Proceedings of the Third International Congress, Santorini, Greece, 3-9 September, 1989</i> .
WPT I and II	S. Sherratt (ed.), 2000. <i>The Wall Paintings of Thera: Proceedings of the First International Symposium, Petros M. Nomikos Centre, Thera, 30 August-4 September 1997</i> .
XAPIS	A. Chapin (ed.), 2004. <i>XAPIS. Essays in Honour of Sara A. Immerwahr</i> . Hesperia Supplement 33.

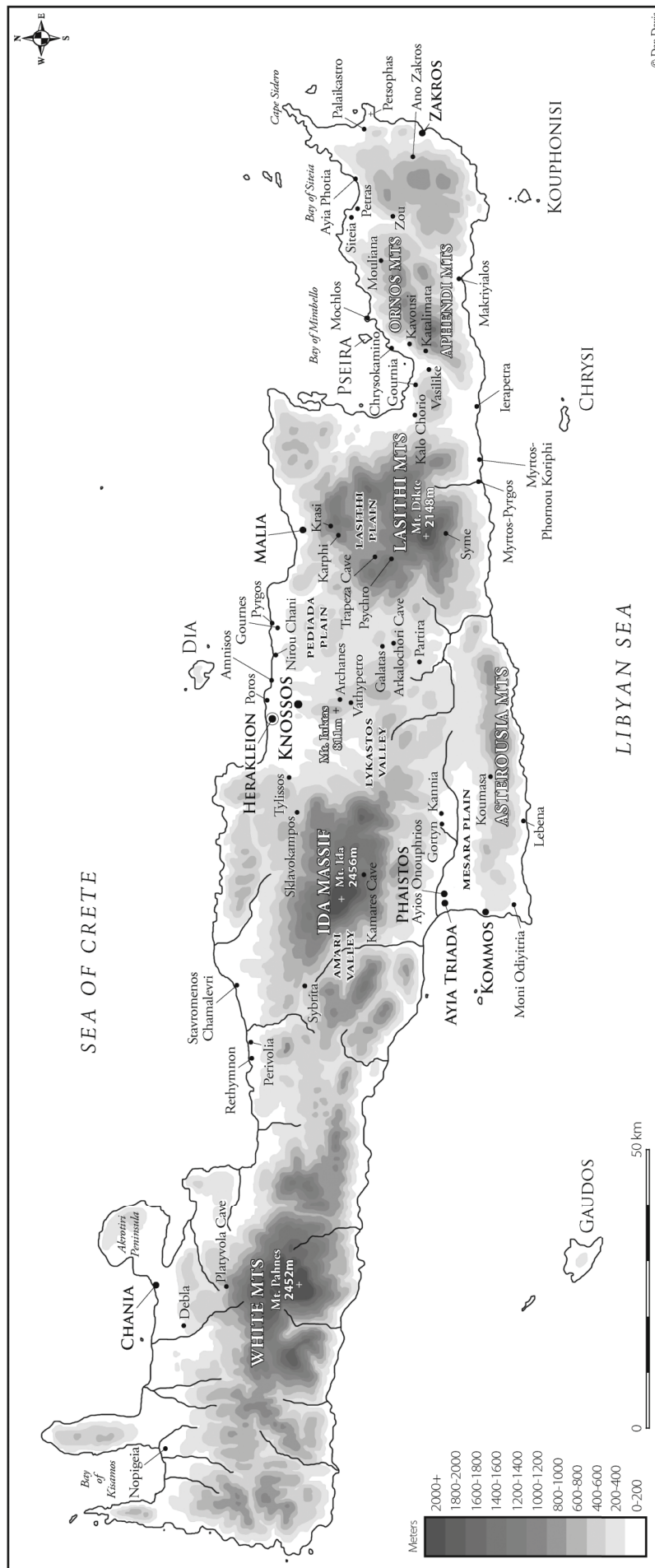
Maps



Map 1 – The Lands Bordering the Aegean Sea
Map courtesy Dan Davis and CUP.

Maps

Map 2 – Crete
Map courtesy Dan
Davis and CUP.



Chronological Table

Aegean Bronze Age with Special Reference to Seal Iconography

BCE	Crete	Seal Iconography	Mainland
3000	EM I – Prepalatial		EH I
2700	EM II	The Early Seal Period (2700–1700) Seals Cut in Soft Materials	EH II House of the Tiles, Lerna
2200	EM III MM IA		EH III
1900	MM IB – Protopalatial First Palaces Built		MH I
1800	MM IIA – MM IIB Destructions		MH II
1700	MM III – Neopalatial New Palaces Built	Experimentation Period (1700–1600)	MH III Mycenae Circle B
1630/1610	LM IA		LH I
1525	Thera Volcanic Eruption	Minoan High Art Period (1600–1440)	Mycenae Circle A
1520	LM IB Destructions		LH IIA 1520/1510
1440	LM II – Postpalatial Knossos Palace Remaining		LH IIB 1450/1440
1410/1400	LM IIIA1	Legacy Period (1440–1300) Cutting of Hard Stone Seals Ceases	LH IIIA1 1410/1400 Mainland Palaces
1355/1345 1350/1340	LM IIIA2 Knossos Palace Destroyed		LH IIIA2 1360
1290	LM IIIB	Late Seal Period (1300–1200)	LH IIIB 1295 Final Mainland Palaces
1240			LH IIIB1 Destructions LH IIIB2 End Destruction
1200	LM IIIC		LH IIIC 1200/1190
1070	Sub-Minoan		Sub-Mycenean

The Table follows the Low Chronology. Absolute dates are approximate. All dates are BCE.

INTRODUCTION

THE AEGEAN SEAL TRADITION

Chapter 1 The Importance of the Seal

In the Herakleion Museum in Crete there are many display cases filled with Aegean seals. The tourist visitor peers into the first case rather surprised at the tiny size of these artifacts, at their smooth shape and often pretty stone colours. She then notices that, beside each one, there is an impression and a picture, and she realises that the seal has made the impression and that the picture matches the design that the seal stone has pressed out. She studies one in detail. “What does it mean?” she begins to ask. Then it is on to the next case to ask, “Why are there so many?” As more and more seal cases stretch before her, the realisation comes that, if she spends time looking at each seal and trying to read its design, there will be no time to enjoy all the other wonderful pieces of art surrounding her. There is a pause a little later when she comes to the cases with the gold signet rings. How could one not stop and marvel at the shining beauty of these gems and the skill of the artistry! Then she realises that these signets are seals too, since there are again the impressions for each and the enigmatic little drawings. “What exactly is being shown here?” she continues to muse as she moves on. It would be the same with the other great collections of Aegean seals – in the Athens National Museum, the Ashmolean Museum Oxford, the Metropolitan Museum New York, the Cabinet des Médailles Paris, the Staatliche Museen Berlin. For the tourist visitors the thousands of seals on display are overwhelming, and even if they are left with a lingering question in their minds they must move on. So, why are there so many seals? What use are they? What do the seal images mean? Now, it is not only tourists who visit the Herakleion Museum and its counterparts abroad. Scholars from various disciplines like archaeology and art history come to the Aegean seal images in serious enquiry about the view of life that the seal artists have presented to us. Indeed, an international assembly of scholars of the Aegean world have been researching the seals over the past century, and much has been discovered about them through excavation and technical investigation, even while questions of the iconography of the seal images have received somewhat less attention.

Now, humankind has been using seals of various shapes and sizes to identify their possessions for some 10,000 years from the earliest examples pressed in clay in Syria down to those of recent centuries pressed in red sealing wax¹. The seals that so piqued the curiosity of the tourist visitors are but the Aegean usage of this most functional tool, a usage that extended across fifteen centuries from its beginning in Minoan Crete c.2700 BCE and that influenced contemporary cultures in the Islands and Mainland Greece. Yet it is not only the lengthy duration of the Aegean seal tradition that commands attention; it is what the seals can tell us of the life, art and culture of the Aegean peoples that makes them so important. The seals allow insights into the workings of palace economies and the tracing of trade and interconnections. The seals reveal the technical skill of the artisans and their interest in artistic innovation. Significantly, the seal images give the most extensive illustrations of life as it was lived and imagined in Crete and Greece in the Bronze Age. There are, of course, other art forms that hold images of Aegean life. The wonderful frescoes on palace and villa walls provide carefully detailed paintings of particular episodes, but they come late in the artistic record. Smaller items of gold and silver metalwork, ivory carving, relief vases and

1 The International Seal Symposium to celebrate 50 years of the *Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel* (CMS) was held in Marburg in October 2008, and its papers covered the phenomenon of sealing usage from the Ancient World, through Classical times to the official seals of Church and State in Europe in the modern era. Published as CMS B8, it provides a fascinating record of the variety of seals and their images as well as granting a glimpse into the life of these civilisations.

jewellery show chosen subjects wrought in various designs. There are no remains of large-scale sculpture but some figurines survive. Pottery, which is the only other art form extending across the whole period, is regularly painted in the most delightful designs but the subject matter is limited: floral and geometric patterns predominate but animals are rare and human figures are not included until very late indeed. All these media participate in the same artistic repertoire as the seals, but it is the seal images that give us the fullest iconographic record for this fifteen-century time span.

In its own attempt to answer questions of iconography this book will explain why these tiny items possess a significance out of all proportion to their size, and how their images take us deeply into the lives of the Aegean peoples. This book requires no previous knowledge of the seals, their designs, their dating or the archaeology of the Bronze Age Aegean in order to study the seal images. It is written for the museum visitors who asked those many questions so that they can readily immerse themselves in the world of Aegean seals and come to appreciate their beauty and significance. It is written for the scholars in other fields to ease their introduction to the amazing creativity of Aegean seal design so that they may come to understand the art of the seals through comparing it with the art of other times and other places. It is written for the Aegean scholars who already know much of the archaeological detail, but who are now being given, in the following pages of illustration, description and interpretation, easier access to the information encoded in the seal images. For museum visitors and scholars alike, my aim is to have this book work for everyone. I trust that the tourist visitors will be able to move through the book with some ease as they meet with the seals. I trust that the scholars from other disciplines will find the following pages enlightening in their quest for comparisons. I trust that the Aegean scholars will discover new vistas in the seal images to complement their existing knowledge of the Bronze Age Aegean.

Enjoy the seals!

The Owner, the Artist and the Society (Plates 1.1 to 1.24)

A seal, by definition, is a unique piece, its detail proclaiming the identity of the owner, the marking of her/his possessions and the exercise of his/her ownership and/or authority. The seal is thus a precious item in the lives of first, the Minoans of Crete, and then of other Aegean peoples of the Islands and the Mycenaeans of Mainland Greece who came under Minoan influence. If there were no other reason for us to study the seals, the high esteem in which they were regarded by the people themselves would be sufficient cause. Let us look at the relationship of the seal owner with her/his seal, with the artist who creates the seal and with the society that recognises the significance of the seal.

As with so much in the Bronze Age we know little of the owner, certainly not his/her name. For the finest seals in semi-precious hard stones and the gold signets, the owner must have been one of the community's elite, but the presence of so many simple seals in common soft stones testifies that the desire to possess a seal was deep in the Minoan psyche from the very beginning of seal production to the end. The seals were important to the people themselves; prized possessions, statements of identity, to be worn proudly in life and to accompany them in death. Seals are individual, created by the owner-to-be commissioning the piece by deciding on the material, colour, shape and image. Each of these aspects represents a deliberate choice, a collaboration between the owner-to-be and the seal artist trained in the skills of seal carving or of fashioning gold signets. We are not sure in which order the choice might have been made – whether the owner-to-be first chose the material and colour, the particularly hued stone or gold, and then decided on the shape and design, or whether she/he had the design as the primary requisite and then approached the seal artist for advice on the material, colour and shape which would complement the chosen design. Then there are the questions of whether the owner-to-be is rich enough to access the finest material and the most renowned seal artists or whether perhaps he/she lives a humbler life and can afford only a plain soft stone and a local artist to create her/his seal.

We can now begin to look at the accompanying Plates which, throughout the book, present the seals for view and study while the accompanying text describes and eventually interprets. In choosing the material, where beauty of colour is a deciding factor, is the seal to be a bright white, as in the bone

of 1.1 or the hippopotamus ivory of 1.13 and 1.14, or even the shining transparency of the rock crystal in 1.23? Perhaps the rich dark blue of lapis lazuli will be chosen as in 1.2 or the solid green of jasper as in 1.17 and 1.22. Then there are all the stones of the red-orange-brown spectrum to explore, as in the carnelians of 1.8, 1.16, 1.24, 1.36 and 1.42 and the agates of 1.18 and 1.47. Maybe the owner-to-be is attracted to variegated tones, and so a piece of jasper will be chosen for its wonderful veining as in 1.3. When choosing the shape of the seal, which may provide one or more faces to hold the image, it could be figural as in a stamp seal like the animal head in 1.1, the little owl in 1.13 or a sitting monkey in 1.28. It could be a shaped stamp like 1.7 and 1.29 or a petschaft like 1.19 and 1.25 or a hippopotamus tusk segment like 1.14. It could be a geometric shape like the three-sided prism in 1.15, 1.16, 1.37 and 1.39 or the four-sided prism in 1.17 and 1.38 or the lentoid (lens-shaped) as in 1.8, 1.18, 1.22 and 1.24 or the amygdaloid (almond-shaped) as in 1.42 and 1.46. It could even be a great gold signet as in 1.6, 1.20, 1.21, 1.26, 1.41 and 1.48. In deciding the image to be wrought on one (or more) of the faces, is the subject to be a flower or an animal or a scene of human endeavour? In all these choices we cannot be sure of the desires of the owner. Is the seal her/his own personal identification or is it representative of family or clan identity? Perhaps it indicates an elite position in the community or the right to enter the palace or to control the commodities stored there. Now, there is not a full choice for any one owner at any one time. There are favoured materials in certain periods, there are favoured shapes and there are images appropriate to certain times but not to others.

Once the seal is created to the owner's specifications then it may be worn. The jewellery aspect of the seals with all its capacity for display should never be forgotten. The seals are, after all, a record of taste and fashion for the fifteen centuries we are observing. The earlier large seals were meant to be suspended, perhaps around the neck or possibly fastened to the belt at the waist. The suspension hole is clearly seen in 1.7, 1.19 and 1.25. The later, smaller seals were shaped smooth so that they could lie flat when tied around the wrist, as with the robed male figure in 1.4. In 1.5, the enlargement of the detail of 1.4 shows the positioning where the photographer's lighting for the black and white photo has caught the seal shape carved on the wrist². Sometimes the string hole through the seal was capped with gold finials as in 1.8 or the seal was set within a gold frame as in 1.43. The signet rings were, of course, worn on the hand with the back of the bezel shaped in a careful curve so that the ring could fit snugly down on the finger as in 1.20³. In 1.6 the detail shows a woman boulder kneeler holding out her left hand where she wears a signet ring on her index finger. For signet rings the bezel being at right angles to the hoop allows the owner to view the image easily with the hand at rest as in 1.26. The seal could delight its owner in various ways in the wearing. Stone when worn warms to the body, allowing the owner to feel his/her seal becoming part of them. A ring can be held out on the hand to show the design so that it can be admired by friends and peers as the light catches every detail wrought in the metal.

When the time comes to use the seal, the owner is even more closely identified with her/his seal. The item to be secured – a jar, a box, a folded parchment letter – is first tied with string, a blob of moist soft clay is placed on the item across the string binding and the owner presses the seal down into the clay to imprint the image, thus creating a sealing as in 1.10 to 1.12. The back of the sealing regularly shows the shape of the item secured and its binding, as with the packet sealing in 1.9⁴. It is likely that the seal or signet was taken off and held appropriately by handle, finials or ring hoop, so that a clear impression could be achieved. Was this act of impressing a private matter or was it a performance witnessed by others? It is unlikely that the impressing was ever a matter quite as private to the owner as for some

2 Other examples of wearing seals on the wrist include the male cupbearer in the Procession Fresco at Knossos, CM, Plate XV, reconstruction AWP, Frontispiece, and the female deity in the Cult Centre Fresco at Mycenae, AWP, Plate 24b. John Younger provides representations of jewellery, Younger 1992b, 257-293, LXIII-LXVIII.

3 Walter Müller discusses the wearing of gold signet rings, Müller 2005, KT, 171-176, XXXIV-XXXVIII. Ingo Pini discusses jewellery as he presents an array of beautiful non-sphragistic rings, Pini 2010c.

4 Walter Müller gives an extensive treatment of the sealing types with Tables 1-8 illustrating their different shapes, Müller 1999, CMS II.6, 339-519.

European gentleman writing a personal letter a century or two ago. If the experience of other peoples with traditional sealing practices is any guide, then the different impressing situations are related to the position of the owner and the nature of the seal itself. Impressings simple stone seals in a family situation would be at one end of the spectrum while the impressing of a prestigious signet by its elite owner would be at the other, a statement of power before the witnessing group.

Now consider the life of the sealings such as those illustrated in 1.10 to 1.12. Once the impressing is complete and the sealing has dried, it takes on a life of its own but is never fully separated from the owner. This sealing is known to the worker who stacks the sealed commodity in the storeroom or to the porter who carries the sealed produce to its destination. When the sealing secures a letter then the messenger delivering it would be very aware of the importance of the small package being transferred. During this storing or transport process many eyes may see the sealing, thus recalling the original owner and the moment of impressing. Finally, the person retrieving the commodities from the storeroom or the person accepting the letter will break the sealing and open the item which has, until then, been so carefully secured. This action of receiving and opening brings the relationship with the original owner-impressor particularly close. Thus, the sealing has drawn in a whole group of people who have been involved in witnessing the wearing of the seal and its impressing, who have been entrusted with the care and transfer of the item, and who are the recipient seal breakers, and all this activity testifies to the identity of the original owner and re-enforces their identity and authority.

The seal artist, by training, is either a seal carver working in stone or similar material or a goldsmith working in metal and, we assume, crafting the seal image is part of learning their trade. Throughout this book, the seal creator is referred to as the artist. This is all the more appropriate because the subject of this book is the image and the seal artist is the creator of the seal with its image. At the point that the owner-to-be calls in the seal artist to commission the seal, who is this person and what have they done to be the one qualified to be chosen to create the seal? Each calling carries its own technical challenges. The seal carver must know their material. In the early days, the material would have been local stone like the steatite in 1.15 and 1.33 – perhaps pebbles collected in a river bed or on the sea shore where the water has brightened the colours and striations so that it has caught the eye of the artist. Knowing the relative softness (now registered as 1-4 on the Mohs Scale) of the stone and how to spot imperfections which might fracture the piece as it is being worked or as the string hole is being bored is gradually acquired over time. Training in using the chisels to shape the seal, the abrasives to smooth it, and the burins to cut the design requires a long apprenticeship appropriate for all the soft materials including the hippopotamus ivory, a precious commodity, when it became available in EM III⁵. All these early seals have a flat seal face which carries the design. A revolution for the seal artists occurred when they adopted the stationary lathe⁶ some time in MM II and it became possible to drill hard stone (Mohs Scale 5-8). This allowed them to carve more intricate designs because the hard stone takes finer detail. With these advances the seal face came to be shaped as a convex curve which can be held up to the rotating drill point in order to cut the design. To create the gold signet the goldsmiths, too, must know their material. The facility with smelting and casting the metal and the ability to use drills and hammers to chase and beat the design are also skills long acquired. Here the additional pressure of working with a very precious commodity would impose extra responsibility. Training for the goldsmith was early testified in the production of fine gold jewellery in EM III⁷, and it is also seen early in the seals with the gold petschaft in 1.19 and the gold four sided prism in 2.8. Somewhat later this skill was turned to the manufacture of gold signets which came into full favour in LM I when the designs on the bezels were worked with exquisite refinement, as seen in the detail of 1.21, and rings were decorated with elaborate granulation on the hoops, as seen in the slightly later example 1.20. However, as we have noted, the technical skill of the artist was not the

5 These dating terms such as EM, MM and LM are explained below.

6 For illustrations of the ancient lapidary lathe, traditional usage and modern equipment see AS 84, Figure 5.1.

7 For the gold jewellery from Mochlos see FLL, 131 A-B, 132 A-B.

only talent that was being assessed by the owner-to-be when commissioning the seal. There is also the creation of the image which was to represent the owner as his/her identity stamp. The artist must know the traditional designs and even, at times, be prepared to venture into new subject matter to please the owner. Then, as the seal artist prepares to fit the design to the seal face (more on this in Chapter 2), they must always vary the subject matter sufficiently to produce a unique design.

Consideration of these aspects of the seal artist's training and relationship with the individual owner who wears the seal brings us to view the wider scene, the society's view of the artist and the seal. As we have seen above, the Aegean peoples continued the seal tradition for some fifteen centuries, indicating that seals must have been seen as important. Seal usage already had a long life in Crete before the sealing of commodities and letters by LM palace administrators testifies to the usefulness of the seal in organising society⁸. In the palace storerooms sealings would always have been visible to the workers as part of their everyday lives⁹. The life of the sealing brings many other community members together, linking the owner-impressor with the transporter of the goods/packages and the receiver and breaker of the sealing. In all these aspects the Aegean experience parallels that of the sealing practices to the east. Yet there might be more to the significance of the seal in the Aegean. The community's appreciation of the artistic beauty of the seals seems to underlie the creation of the best pieces across all periods. The society underwrites the investment in the skill of the seal artist by recognising the length of time needed for training. The very early seal cutters might have been itinerant but in later times the seal artists were working in the palaces where appropriate workshop space was assigned¹⁰. Precious raw materials, many of them imported¹¹, were made available for the seals. Certain elite individuals appear to have been seal connoisseurs who made collections of the finest pieces, as evidenced in burials at Vaphio and Pylos¹². However, the community might have found the seal's most valuable feature to be the image created by the artist. The artist reflects the community's world back to its members. The artist encapsulates the community's values and gives them visual expression. The artist creates the dialogue between the members of the community in this world and the gods in the other world. The three examples 1.22 to 1.24 showing the natural world, geometric design and a human figure accompanied by lions remind us of the range of subject matter which we have already seen in the seals discussed above under different aspects. There will be more on the interpretive role of the seal artist in the following chapters as we explore the messages hidden in the seals and revealed on pressing out these wonderful images.

Recording the Seals: the Role of the CMS (Plates 1.25 to 1.27)

As we have noted, seals are important because they provide the largest visual record of art in the Aegean by virtue of their range of topics and their length of floruit. Aegean seals are, almost without exception, stamp seals, pieces of some hard entity shaped to have a surface, called the face, which features an image to be pressed down¹³. Taken together they may be referred to as glyptic art, or more generally as "the

8 See Weingarten 1986, 279-283 and 1988a, 1-25 and Anderson 2016.

9 The complicated sealing practices would require close observation of the images to check for the correct sequences. In later years workers might not have observed the design as carefully since they wrote Linear B signs over it. However, this may be another reflection of the diminished role of seal iconography in LH IIIB even as seals were still being used in Mycenaean palace storerooms.

10 As with the Seal Workshop at Mallia, Poursat 1978, 831-836 and CMS B1, 159-165.

11 For imported hippopotamus ivory and the hard stones of amethyst, haematite and lapis lazuli see Krzyszkowska 1990, 38-47 and AS, 12.

12 The elite burial in the Vaphio Tholos held 42 seals, CMS I, 219-261. The warrior burial in the Griffin Warrior Grave at Pylos held numerous seals with publication available for four gold signets, Davis and Stocker 2016, 627-655 and two agates, Stocker and Davis 2017, 583-605 and CANP, 293-299. See Plates 14.13 to 14.18 below.

13 In contrast to the cylinder seals of the Mesopotamian tradition where the design is carved on the circumference face and accessed by rolling out the cylinder across the soft clay.

seals” which is the all-encompassing name used here. The extant seals total some 12,000 pieces, giving us some 13,500 images since some seals have two or more design faces. This may seem a large amount of material but it is only about 3%, maybe only about 1%, of all the seals created across the many centuries of seal manufacture¹⁴.

In reading the section above on the Owner, the Artist and the Society, and on viewing the accompanying seal illustrations, readers will already have become aware that the body of material generally termed “the seals” actually comprises seals, signet rings and sealings as shown in all their aspects in 1.25 to 1.27. The seals are shaped pieces of stone or other material with at least one side smoothed to take the design which is carved *intaglio* into its surface as in the chalcedony petschaft in 1.25. The signets are usually gold rings with an oval bezel set at right angles to the hoop as in 1.26. The bezel is hollow, formed from two pieces joined together. The lower one may be shaped in a curve, the finger bed, to fit snugly over the finger, and the upper one carries the design which has been punched and shaped into the gold. Occasionally, the ring is of bronze, and some rings have round bezels as in 2.22. There are also examples of stone signets like the one made of red jasper in 2.24. The sealings, as in 1.27, are the original impressions made in clay in the Bronze Age and preserved when buildings burned, thus baking the clay hard and providing little relief sculptures for archaeologists to find some 3,500 years later. The original piece might have been a seal or a signet but it does not remain¹⁵. The sealing testifies to that original piece by providing the image that the seal held. It comes as somewhat of a surprise that the seals are so small. The seal face of the petschaft in 1.25 has a diameter of 1cm, the bezel of the signet in 1.26 measures 2.35cm x 1.6cm, and the bezel of the original signet which impressed the clay sealing 1.27 is 2.5cm x 1.45cm. Thus, the images you are looking at on the Plate page here and throughout the book are about twice the size of the real gems. This small size, of course, places considerable restraints on the artist creating the design to carve/engrave on the seal face (more on this in Chapter 2).

Seal designs are standardly discussed by the impression their design yields when pressed into some soft material and so, for the extant seals and signets, a modern impression is made, usually in plasticine, as in 1.25 and 1.26. This reminds us that the design is actually a tiny relief sculpture and, in addition to discussing the length and breadth of the piece, its depth should always be recognised in any observations or analyses. A drawing of the impression or sealing is also provided for easy reference as in 1.25, 1.26 and 1.27. Note that the impression and thus the drawing is always the mirror reverse of the design actually carved on the seal face. The sealing image, of course, is already the mirror reverse of the seal image and it, too, may be recorded as a drawing. Thus, the drawing of the sealing is a parallel to the drawing of the impression made when the original seal is still available. When there are several examples of partial sealings from the one seal/signet it is possible to create a composite drawing which reveals the full design. However, fine points of explanation or meaning should not be argued from the drawings as they may not include every detail that is recorded in the *intaglio* carving or the resulting relief. The impressions must always be consulted, and where possible, the seals or sealings themselves.

The research institute responsible for classifying the seal material is the Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel (CMS) which worked in Marburg Germany from 1958 to 2008 under successive Directors, Professor Friedrich Matz, Professor Ingo Pini and Dr Walter Müller. The CMS then relocated to Heidelberg University, placing the extensive CMS Archives in the care of the present Director, Professor Diamantis Panagiotopoulos, and the Curator, Dr Maria Anastasiadou¹⁶. For over 50 years in Marburg the research team, to whom we are all deeply indebted, sourced the seal material in the major

14 I thank Ingo Pini for discussions on these numbers.

15 When the sealing has been clearly enough impressed it is possible to determine whether a soft or hard stone seal or a metal signet was used. The CMS entries note this feature.

16 Founded in 1958 by Friedrich Matz, the Professor at Marburg University, the CMS in Marburg was funded for over 50 years as an Arbeitsstelle of the Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Mainz. Following the move to Heidelberg, the extensive CMS Archives are now housed in the Archaeological Institute at Heidelberg University. For a short history of the Corpus see Pini CMS B8, 3-10.

museums and private collections around the world and produced the standard publication of the seals, the *Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel (CMS)*. Each *Volume* in this publication records the seal collections at a particular site, usually a Museum like the National Museum in Athens or the Cabinet des Médailles in Paris. Within the *Volume* the material is generally ordered by find site and dating. The *CMS* publication numbers illustrate and describe each piece and thus provide the standard identification for each seal. The seal identification number is a composite of the *Volume* in the *CMS* Series (Roman numerals) and the seal's order within the volume (Arabic numerals) e.g. CMS II.1 18 labels the first seal illustrated as 1.1 here, and it places the seal as number 18 in *CMS Volume II.1*. The CMS number and the CMS-assigned stylistic date are used throughout this book. Most seals are already documented in *CMS Volumes I-XIII* and in the CMS Database and Website. There are additional seals not yet published by the CMS. Some of these seals are in the Herakleion Museum being prepared for publication, and there is a further group remaining in small private collections, while each year excavations in Greece bring new seals to light. Over the years the CMS has sponsored conferences and individual research into special aspects of the seals, and these are recorded in the accompanying series, *CMS Beiheft Volumes 1-10*.

In the *CMS Volumes* the seals are set out, one to a page, with photographs of the seal, its impression and a drawing of the impression as well as a text description of the image and details of the provenance. The early *Volumes* were edited by different scholars, and the descriptions of their images often vary for the same motif. This variation was somewhat corrected in the later *Volumes* edited by CMS staff where a more consistent descriptive vocabulary was employed¹⁷. The early *Volumes* also contain many seals listed as *gemmae dubitandae* since comparative material was not available. However, as the years of CMS study continued and more knowledge was gained, it became clear that these seals, once considered doubtful, would no longer be considered so¹⁸. Then there are some seals and signets whose provenance is debated, and so they are questioned by some scholars. Of these, the Minos Ring and the Nestor Ring¹⁹ are the most contentious although, again, further scholarship has established that they are authentic, to the satisfaction of most experts, and I accept them both as genuine.

The Seal Tradition across Fifteen Centuries (Plates 1.28 to 1.51)

To date the development of seals and seal designs we must turn to archaeology, relying on the dating of the pottery sequences, since, in the Aegean, we are in pre-history with no records naming rulers or events to provide a true history. These archaeological sequences give us a Relative Chronology for each area. Aegean Chronology uses the terms Minoan (M) for Crete, Helladic (H) for Mainland Greece and Cycladic (C) for the Aegean islands. A general term Bronze (B) is sometimes used when the reference cannot be more specific. The various periods are divided into Early (E), Middle (M) and Late (L) with further sub-divisions noted as I, II and III and further sub-divisions as A, B and C. For Crete the chronological sequence may also be named in longer eras by reference to the successive building eras and destructions of the great palaces. Prepalatial Crete EM I-MM IA refers to the time before the palaces were built. Protopalatial Crete MM IB-MM II refers to the time of the floruit of the first palaces and ends with the great seismic destructions at the close of MM II. Neopalatial Crete MM III-LM IB refers to the floruit of the second palaces and ends with the widespread destructions of major sites at the end of LM IB. Postpalatial Crete LM II-LM III refers to the time after most of the palaces were destroyed although for a time the Knossos Palace remained.

The Relative Chronology of the Aegean can be tied into historically dated contexts in Egypt and the Near East to achieve an Absolute Chronology giving numerical dates. A Chronology for the Aegean Bronze Age which uses both the Relative and Absolute Chronologies is provided above in the

17 Kryszkowska gives an overview of the *CMS* Series with guidance on the problems, AS, 341-348.

18 I thank Ingo Pini for advice on these matters.

19 The Minos Ring and the Nestor Ring are illustrated as 13.85 and 13.86 and discussed in Chapter 13 below.

Chronological Table, Aegean Bronze Age with Special Reference to Seal Iconography. As all dates are BCE only the actual figures are used here. Establishing Aegean Chronology is fraught with problems even as scholars draw on the disciplines of archaeology and radiocarbon dating. The above *Table* relies on the chronology for the Middle to Late Bronze Age Aegean advanced by Malcolm Wiener²⁰. It sets the key dates for the volcanic eruption of Thera at 1525, the Minoan destructions at the end of LM IB at 1440 and the final destruction of the Knossos Palace at 1350/1340. The iconographic chronology for seal images parallels this developed Aegean Chronology but allows for long periods of creativity since only five Iconographic Periods for the fifteen centuries, 2700 to 1200, are identified as below.

Seal manufacture began in Minoan Crete in EM II, say c.2700, and continued until the disintegration of the Mycenaean world at the end of LH IIIC c.1070. During the final century late Mycenaean seals were cut in soft stone. However, there was minimal interest in seal design and no use of sealing practices²¹. Accordingly, we will consider the great Aegean seal tradition to end when the Mycenaean palaces were destroyed at the end of LH IIIB, c.1200, and sealing practices came to an end. The period of some fifteen centuries, 2700 to 1200, is thus the focus of this book. During this long floruit there are two important points to note about stone seal cutting technique. The first is late in the protopalatial period, in MM II, say c.1800, when the stationary lathe was adopted, allowing seals to be carved in hard material rather than the softer materials chosen hitherto. The second is the cessation of the carving of hard stone seals by the end of LH IIIA, probably following the destruction of the Knossos Palace c.1350/1340. Thereafter carving of soft stone seals continued, particularly in Crete, although seemingly in diminished output. It is also of note that many of the sealings impressed in the archives of the Mycenaean palaces in LH IIIB appear to be made by heirloom pieces. For the first fourteen centuries of this fifteen centuries floruit the seal was the seminal art form, as will be argued here.

The dating of individual seals is a complex matter. How wonderful it would be if, in the Bronze Age, there had been a requirement to sign with a hallmark, as with European and American gold and silver manufacture of more recent times where the maker, the place and the year of its completion are recorded²². Alas, it is not so. In our Aegean era of pre-history, dating by pottery sequence is the regimen, and frequent shifts of motifs and styles make it possible to narrow individual ceramic pieces down to decades. The pottery nomenclature of Early, Middle and Late Minoan and Helladic with their numerical subdivisions is the dating scaffolding which makes it possible for scholars to navigate these centuries, and the seals, too, are given a date in this schema. How does one arrive at a such a date for a seal? When pieces have been carefully excavated the find place sets a date before which the seal must have been made in order to be deposited there²³. This does not guarantee the date of the seal's production since it may have been made many years before being deposited. The problem of heirloom pieces is always a possibility with beautiful and valuable seals. Yet, archaeological provenance cannot help with many seals as they have often come to light in various ways over the centuries – as curiosities, or for sale as antiquities, or even worn as charms. This was exactly the situation last century for Arthur Evans who found Cretan women wearing beads/seals which he recognised as carrying writing signs. He followed up this lead to find the site of Knossos and discover the Minoan civilisation²⁴. However, the seals without provenance can be compared with excavated seals. With so much careful archaeology over the last 50 years, scholars have a body of excavated seal material that can be dated accurately and can be the measure to date the

20 I thank Malcolm Wiener for his guidance in matters chronological and for the time he has unstintingly given to discuss dating and other issues with me over the years. This Chronology improves on the one provided in my earlier IAS volume.

21 For discussion of the late soft-stone seals see Dickers 2001.

22 Wyler 1971, 1-16, with special attention to early English silver and its hallmarks, maker's marks and date letters.

23 The "terminus ante quem" date is the date before which the event (or the piece) under scrutiny must have occurred (or must have been made).

24 The women were wearing the seals as charms to make their milk flow, the "galopetra".

many seals that have come to light from other, often doubtful, sources. The work of the CMS to gather seals into groups and sequences has been the defining research to allow a stylistic date for its creation to be applied to each seal. As noted above, during the long time period of the seal floruit, various materials and various shapes moved in and out of favour and the technical skill of the artist changed, first improving to allow finer definition of detail and then eventually losing that capacity. However, these changes may take centuries to evolve, and so the time periods for seal development are usually much longer than those for pottery and are less subject to minor divisions reckoned in decades. The mix of choice of material, seal shape, technical expertise and iconography, when linked to excavation information where available, allows a seal expert to place the manufacture of a seal within a date range. Using the pottery nomenclature, the CMS has assigned a stylistic date to each seal, and these dates are listed for all the seals discussed here in the text and illustrated in the Plates.

In her ground-breaking book, *Aegean Seals*, Olga Krzyszkowska takes readers chronologically through the Aegean seal tradition, explaining materials and technique and describing designs²⁵. The Plates 1.28 to 1.51 are provided here as a useful visual summary of Aegean seals in chronological sequence. In Minoan Crete, prepalatial seals (EM II-MM IA) are cut in a variety of shapes, as evidenced in the figural, stamp, signet, cube, cylinder and gable examples 1.28 to 1.33. These same seals show the range of materials favoured from stone and bone through to hippopotamus ivory, with some made of a composite material called the white pieces like the one in 2.49. Designs draw on geometric, animal, plant and fantastic subject matter, and there are some human figures. Note the lovely agrimi (wild goat) in 1.31. Protopalatial seals (MM IB-MM II) favour the petschaft as seen in 1.25, the stamps as in 1.34 and 1.35 and the three sided and four sided prisms as in 1.37 to 1.39. Soft stones like steatite continue to be carved but, after the adoption of the stationary lathe, hard stones like carnelian and jasper are worked increasingly. For designs, the interest in geometric, animal, plant and fantastic subject matter continues. Note the beautiful lilies with spiral stems in 1.36. There are more representations of human figures undertaking a variety of tasks as in 1.37 and 1.39. Cretan hieroglyphic script is carefully carved as in 1.38 and 1.39. Seals of the neopalatial era (MM III-LM IB) show superb craftsmanship and intricate designs as in 1.40 to 1.45. The favourite shapes are now the lentoid and the amygdaloid. Some are still cut in soft stone but hard stones like chalcedony, carnelian and lapis lazuli are favoured while glass is sometimes used as in 1.45. The gold signets continue the love of colour that is such a feature of Aegean glyptic. Subject matter loses the geometric motifs but expands to cover more naturalistic scenes and human activity as well as symbolic motifs. Two special sets of seals belong here: the talismanic seals²⁶ and the Zakros Fantasy group²⁷. The many sealings from the LM IB destructions expand the number of examples of seal and signet designs. Note the detailed sealing with the bull and leaper in 1.44. This is also the time of great influence on Mainland Greece and its uptake of the seal tradition (LH I-LH IIA). Postpalatial Crete and the Mycenaean ascendancy (LM II-LM III and LH II-LH III) see the manufacture of seals continuing with known shapes, stones and colours as in 1.46 to 1.49. Soft stones continue to be cut in Crete²⁸ but the Mainland uses hard stones. Note the fine lapis lacedaimonius lentoid with a hybrid man in 1.49. Some subject matter is lost and designs become more formal. By the end of LH IIIB the range of motifs is drastically reduced, and humans and animals are increasingly rendered in a schematic manner as in 1.50 and 1.51. Note the steatite lentoid with schematic human figures in 1.51.

25 AS is described by its author as “An Introduction”. It is much more than that, providing detail on every aspect of seal manufacture. It is vital reading for any who would seek to understand the Aegean seal tradition.

26 So called because they were thought to be used as talismans but now identified as a seal group exhibiting a particular technique, see AS, 133-137.

27 This group is identified by its particular subject matter of fantastic combinations, AS, 178-185. Judith Weingarten provides the initial research into the group, Weingarten 1983, and we await with interest the forthcoming book by Maria Anastasiadou.

28 Attempts to sort soft stone seals into a Cretan Popular Group and a later Mainland Popular Group have encountered some problems, AS, 234-235 and 327.

Iconographic Analysis, the *Icon* and the Phaistos Sealings (Plates 1.52 to 1.66)

Now, when iconography becomes the sole focus, the periods of development may be somewhat different. Certainly, the periods of iconographic development must follow the same trajectory as the overall seal tradition since the images are on the seals. However, the timing of significant iconographic changes may punctuate the fifteen centuries of the seal tradition at different points from the breaks in pottery styles and result in an iconographic sequence that has a momentum of its own. To investigate this we will need to observe the images closely.

Our first duty is to describe the content of the Aegean images accurately and systematically so that discussion can proceed on their presentation and, ultimately, on their meaning. For most artistic traditions, the terms for describing image detail come from the society itself and its oral memory and/or literature. Images from the Christian tradition can be described and discussed because the names and exploits of people and their worship are available in surviving texts and books and buildings and through the exposition of people living within the tradition today. One knows immediately who is a Christ figure and what a halo represents. For the ancient world the continuity of living testimony is broken, but written records and architectural remains similarly provide evidence of place and the names and deeds of gods and heroes. In Classical art one can easily identify Athena in her warrior garb and Herakles with lion cape and club. Moreover, in images created within the Egyptian and Mesopotamian traditions it was customary for textual comment to be placed beside and around the depictions. Thus the name of the Pharaoh or tomb-owner is known and their claim to fame carefully explained as well as their worship of gods like Amun and Re. On steles, cylinder seals and large walls, Mesopotamian kings and merchants proclaimed their exploits or begged divine help for their projects, as with Hammurabi establishing his law code as coming from the god Shamash. However, for the contemporary Bronze Age Aegean we do not enjoy the luxury of having such a ready-made vocabulary. Of the three main texts, Cretan Hieroglyphic, Linear A and Linear B, only the last has been deciphered, and it is in Mycenaean Greek, an early form of Classical Greek. Linear B comes into use with the Mycenaean ascendancy, but this leaves all the long development years of Minoan art in Crete without a text that we can translate or use to describe the images. So, we cannot find a vocabulary to describe Minoan iconography from the Minoans themselves. We will have to create one, and in this, we will need to be guided by the insights of iconographic analysis theory.

In 20th century iconography studies Erwin Panofsky was the most influential voice, particularly in his *Studies in Iconology* where he refers to the process of “iconographical analysis”. He categorises three levels of investigation: Pre-Iconographical Description, Iconographical Analysis, and Iconographical Interpretation²⁹. At Level 1, the Pre-Iconographical Description level, the components of the image are set out in a basic description. At Level 2, the Iconographical Analysis level, the overview can expand on the first level of description by probing the composition and using other artistic compositions from the same tradition to help explain the image under examination. Where the names of people, animals and things are available from the associated literature they may be used here. At Level 3, the Iconographical Interpretation level, an investigation into the meaning of the image is attempted not only by comparing other artistic usages but also by drawing on explanations in the associated literature. Subsequently, the addition of a fourth level, Iconological Interpretation, was suggested, where the meaning of the images in the artistic context is widened to include all aspects of the life of the people as understood from all other sources. The early exercises in iconographical analysis investigated western European art, particularly Renaissance art, where both Christian and Classical iconography could draw on extensive historical and literary sources, and Christian art even had a continuing tradition which could inform the iconographer. Panofsky’s method was widely adopted for the analysis of other artistic traditions, and, although later iconographic scholarship contested some of its tenets, it continues to be indebted to his ideas.

29 Panofsky 1962, 14-15.

For the study of Minoan art, the absence of textual and literary help negates some of this structured analysis. The expansive four levels proposed by Panofsky and his followers cannot be employed. Realistically, in the Aegean context there can be only two levels, and these two levels differentiate description and interpretation. The first level, which I have termed Iconographic Description, combines Panofsky's first two levels, Pre-Iconographical Description and Iconographical Analysis, and thus allows clear description of artistic motifs and compositions but does not move into meaning. The second level, which I have termed Iconographic Interpretation, mirrors Panofsky's Iconographical Interpretation and the later-proposed Iconological Interpretation levels and allows the exploration of meaning both within the artistic context and out into the understanding of the society. The whole exercise I term Iconographic Analysis to differentiate it from the Panofsky paradigm.

Now, Aegeanists have always known of this problem of not having any textual or literary gloss to the Aegean images, and some researchers have noted its attendant difficulties. Lyvia Morgan speaks of it as a "special challenge to the iconographer"³⁰ while Anne Chapin believes it confronts the iconographer with a labyrinth to be negotiated and that all enquiry must "apply methods that directly address the lack of textual sources"³¹. I call it the Aegean silence. Indeed, I am not sure that we Aegeanists as a whole have ever really confronted what that text/literature lacuna means for a proper iconographic and artistic discussion in the Aegean. We have, to date, used our own European languages, and various descriptions have evolved. In English we have an inherited vocabulary from the early years of Aegean archaeology for some of the motifs like "horns of consecration" and "sacral knot" and "priest-king" which, in their very names, take us into the next level of Iconographic Interpretation without actually acknowledging that we have done so. We leap intuitively to identify a deity without defining what the criteria are for recognising an immortal as contrasted with a mortal, and again we are blurring the Description/ Interpretation divide. We use terms from later eras like "kouros" and "baetyl" and "cavalier perspective", but using anachronistic terms brings further problems of understanding when the meanings attached to the later terms are brought across to these very early Aegean images. It is time to realise that although we have spent over a century observing Aegean art we still do not have an agreed comprehensive vocabulary of defined terms. We need to face the limitations imposed by the Aegean silence and courageously proceed to develop a standard vocabulary for discussing Aegean art and iconography. This will mean, among other things, that we must set aside colourful and emotive epithets and anachronistic terms which may, by their very nature, mislead the viewer even though they have become familiar through usage. However, the gains of using an agreed standard vocabulary include the precision it provides, the ease of conducting artistic dialogue and the security of knowing that conclusions are based on the hard evidence of the images themselves. Creating a standard vocabulary will also mean much more reliance on the seal images which provide the overwhelming number of examples of all the subject matter across the whole of Aegean art. Fortunately, the careful excavation and publication of the seals across recent decades provide the basis for a more extended standard vocabulary than was previously available. The IconAegean Vocabulary and IconAegean Classification comprise my attempt at just such a comprehensive, nuanced vocabulary and they find their exposition in the IconAegean Databases. The IconAegean Vocabulary and IconAegean Classification (in English) have their source in my reading of Minoan art as the desire of the seal artists to create a memorable image within the small compass of the seal face. The memorable image I have termed the *Icon*, and it is the core of iconographic and artistic composition. The *Icon* and the IconAegean Vocabulary, Classification and Databases are explained fully in Chapter 2 below, but I need to introduce them here because that will make it possible to establish the iconographic sequence.

Using the method of Iconographic Analysis and employing the IconAegean Vocabulary and Classification for accurate presentation of the iconographic content, we can survey the seal images across the fifteen centuries from the beginning in Crete c.2700 to the end of sealing use in Mycenaean Greece

30 AWP, 34.

31 Chapin 2016a, 9-26. She acknowledges the work of Panofsky but sees his divisions as not entirely suitable for Aegean art. In recommending various avenues of enquiry she sees progress as being slow and incremental.

c.1200. One iconographic pivot point is immediately clear: the Phaistos Sealings c.1700. It is not often in the Aegean that we have such a clearly dated artistic inflection point, but here it is! The Phaistos Sealings comprise a sealed and dated deposit of material from the First Palace at Phaistos, most being found under the floor of Room 25. The Sealings have been known since their careful excavation by the Italian School in 1955 and their full publication in 1970 as *Volume II.5* in the *CMS* series, and now they are posted on the CMS Website. While the deposit is securely dated to the destruction level at the end of MM IIB, thus dating most of the sealings to MM II, some of the seals used were made earlier, some possibly as early as EM III-MM IA. The many Sealings reveal to us the use of 326 seals, some being used only once or twice, some several times. Examples 1.52 to 1.66 show the variety of subject matter and compositional detail which can be seen across the Sealings. In examples 1.52 to 1.57 one sees the way content is routinely organised in these early years, with the artist always striving to present the *Icon*, the memorable image, with the utmost clarity within the confines of the small seal face. Floral, foliate and spiralliform elements are regularly displayed as in 1.52 to 1.54. Local animals comprise sole subject images, always with the most characteristic feature of the creature emphasised, as with the bristles standing up on the sturdy back of the boar in 1.55 and the hound head panting with lolling tongue in 1.56. Exotic animals and fantastic creatures also feature as memorable images, again with the essential characteristics stressed. The griffin in 1.57 assembles the body parts of lion and eagle and already has a curled crest, while the lions in 1.58 already show the body and upraised tail quite clearly even in the heraldic rampant pose. For the few human figures that appear in the Sealings, they too are clear in outline and stationary in pose, as with the couple in 1.59. Yet there is a group of Sealings with animal subjects that are quite different in the way they create the memorable image. These animals explode in action and you, as the viewer, are there to see it all. In 1.60 two hounds leap up to hold a great agrimi at bay while in 1.61 a collared hound courses through a rocky landscape with plants in abundance. Examples 1.62 to 1.64 are animal attack scenes where the predator crunches down its prey. In 1.65 the angry bull charges its barriers, all lowered head and pawing hooves. Even when the animal is quietly standing as with the lion in 1.66, it is shown within a landscape of flowering plants and rocks, thus paralleling the craggy rock of 1.60, the plants and rocks of 1.61 and the barriers of 1.65. All these images take us into a new style of art where the movement of living creatures and the sense of place become so important that a whole scene is needed to express them. So it is that we see in the Phaistos Sealings the very moment when this pivot in artistic creation occurred. Earlier artists had endeavoured to portray the characteristic form of the inanimate item or of the living animal but these were isolated static representations. At some time before the end of MM II, while designs depicting the single static animal or thing were still in use, some enterprising seal artists at Phaistos took the whole scene as their eidetic image and re-envisioned the *Icon* to depict the essence of the activity and the essence of place³². This artistic revolution influenced seal design (and design in the other media) to the end, even as developments within the new *Icon* concept marked the different periods of art. Accordingly, the fifteen centuries of seal iconography (EM II to LM IIIB/LH IIIB) are divided into five periods.

The Iconographic Sequence across Fifteen Centuries (Plates 1.67 to 1.102)

The five periods are the *Early Seal Period*, *Experimentation Period*, *Minoan High Art*, *Legacy Period* and *Late Period*. These Periods are set out in the Chronological Table³³.

Early Seal Period (Plates 1.67 to 1.75)

The Early Seal Period (EM II-MM II) lasts for at least 1,000 years from c.2700 to c.1700. It takes us

³² The importance of the Phaistos Sealings for understanding artistic and iconographic development in the Aegean was argued by Crowley in CANP, 19-46.

³³ The iconographic periods parallel the trajectory of the Chronology proper but for the seals, precision within a few decades is not crucial. The sequence and the length of the periods are the most important features.

from the beginning of the seals down to the seismic destruction of the first palaces and incorporates prepalatial seals and protopalatial seals. This is the *longue durée* of seal iconographic development, and the observations of Fernand Braudel are applicable here³⁴. Seals in this Period are dated EM II, EM III, MM I (MM IA and MM IB) and MM II. Defining groups of seals for this Period are the Mesara tholoi prepalatial seals³⁵ and the Mallia Workshop protopalatial seals³⁶. The earliest seals display geometric patterns as with the linear crosshatching like wickerwork in 1.67. The interest in floral/foliate designs accelerates and begins to incorporate spiraliform features as in 1.68. The delight in order and pattern is ever-present as seen in the all-over design of quatrefoils in 1.69. Animal life is portrayed in static poses as in 1.70 to 1.73, sometimes repeating the plan view to make a pattern as with the scorpions in 1.70, often placing statant animals in profile as with the agrimi in 1.71, as well as introducing fantastic creatures as in 1.72 and sea life in 1.73. By the end of the Period the life of humans becomes a more important subject as with the ship in 1.73, the archer in 1.74 and the potter with his ware in 1.75.

Experimentation Period (Plates 1.76 to 1.78)

The Experimentation Period (end MM II Phaistos to early LM IA) lasts for about 100 years from c.1700 to c.1600 and covers the time of the initial re-building of the palaces. This renewal of life after the earlier catastrophic destructions is interrupted by further destructions which put an end to the Period and, unfortunately, destroy much of the evidence for this vibrant creative era. The Period begins with the iconographic innovations at Phaistos which can be traced, and dated, in the Phaistos Sealings. Thus, its naissance actually belongs late in MM II but its effects play out in the ensuing era of rebuilding the palaces at the beginning of the neopalatial period. Artistic periods are often not tidy in advising their beginnings or ends but one must try to understand the creative mind! Seals in this Period are dated MM III and MM III-LM I. Defining groups of seals for this Period are the seals from the Hieroglyphic Deposit and the Temple Repositories at Knossos³⁷. Following the Phaistos awakening to the full possibilities of *Icon* composition, this Period enlivens animal activity as in 1.76, broadens the repertoire with more sea life as in 1.77 and begins to provide much more detail in human figures as in 1.78.

Minoan High Art (Plates 1.79 to 1.90)

The Minoan High Art Period (developed LM IA-LM IB) lasts about 160 years from c.1600 to c.1440. It begins some time into LM IA when the rebuilt palaces are flourishing, encompasses the Thera volcanic eruption c.1525 and the recovery of life after that on Crete and ends with the widespread destructions of Minoan sites at the end of LM IB. This Period covers the peak of Minoan artistic endeavour during the great second palaces of Crete and includes the strong influence of Minoan art on the Mainland at this time. This is the artistic period most acclaimed for its beautiful creations across all artistic media, and it is certainly true of seal iconography where complex images abound. Seals in this Period are dated to LM I (LM IA and LM IB). Seals dated LM I-II and LB I-II are also included in this period since their features identify an initial LM I or LB I identity. This period also covers the emerging interest in seals on the Mainland and so includes seals dated LH I and LH IIA. Defining groups of seals for this Period are the sealings from Hagia Triada, Zakros and Knossos³⁸ and the finds on the Mainland of the Shaft Graves and the Vaphio Tholos³⁹. The iconographic repertoire is expanded to show animal and sea life in lively

34 As a leader of the French Annales School of historiography, Fernand Braudel argued the concept of the *longue durée*, that slow change over long periods informed the movements of history, particularly in his 1973 masterpiece, *La Méditerranée et le Monde Méditerranéen à l'Époque de Philippe II*.

35 AS, 57-58, 63-70.

36 AS, 93-95.

37 For a discussion of the dating and motifs see Gill 1965, 58-98 and CMS B0, 30-36, also Weingarten TRANSITION, 39-52.

38 CMS II.6, II.7 and II.8.

39 CMS I, 219-261.

action as in 1.79 to 1.81. Symbols like the eight shield, double axe, vase and double horns abound, as in 1.82 to 1.84. The activities of humans encompass war, the bull games, everyday work and ceremony as in 1.85 to 1.88. Fantastic creatures and hybrid humans manifest a supernatural world, as with the Dragon Lady in 1.89 and the birdwoman in 1.90.

Legacy Period (Plates 1.91 to 1.99)

The Legacy Period (LM II-LM IIIA and LH IIB-LH IIIA) lasts about 140 years from c.1440 to c.1300. It refers to the time after the LM IB destructions when Mycenaean control and influence were in the ascendant both in Crete and on the Mainland. From this time on we can no longer see the iconography as purely Minoan or even as shaped strongly by Minoan dictates. Mycenaean preferences are to be expected in subject matter choice and execution. By the end of this period the cutting of hard stone seals had ceased. Seals in this Period are stylistically dated to LM II, LM IIIA (LM IIIA1 and LM IIIA2), LB II, LB III, LH II (LH IIB), LH IIIA1 and LH IIIA2. Defining groups of seals for this Period are the seals from Mainland chamber tombs. Animals and fantastic creatures like griffins remain a staple of the iconographic repertoire, as in 1.91 to 1.93 and 1.98. Human figures show mortals involved in ceremonies as in 1.94 but also continue to represent deities as in 1.95 to 1.97. Formal artistic conventions like the antithetical group of 1.97 and 1.98 continue. Human hybrids are favourites as with the bullman in 1.99.

Late Period (Plates 1.100 to 1.102)

The Late Period (LM IIIB and LH IIIB) lasts about 100 years from c.1300 to c.1200. It covers the era of the full expansion of Mycenaean power on the Mainland and also the later troubles that were to engulf the great citadels at the end of LH IIIB. For iconography there are increasingly schematic renderings on soft stones in Crete and the Mainland even as the Mycenaean citadels continue to use heirloom hard stone seals in their recording practices until they were destroyed. Seals in this Period are stylistically dated to LM IIIB, LH IIIB and LB IIIB. The iconographic repertoire becomes drastically reduced. Animals remain as in 1.100 and 1.101 but are summarily treated. Human figures, too, are schematic as in 1.102.

The Format of This Enquiry into Art and Meaning

So, we have come to recognise that the seals are important for many reasons. When surveying the other art forms for their value in revealing the life and culture of the Aegean peoples there is none that can reveal as much as the seals. Pottery is the only other art form that is so long-lived, and it has even more examples. However, the designs on pottery show restricted subject matter, particularly since it has very few human figure compositions. Ivory carving, relief vases, metalwork and jewellery have a limited number of examples. Fresco comes late along with some wall reliefs. No large-scale sculpture remains and only a very few small-scale sculptures in the round exist. Glyptic is one of the two longstanding art forms. It has a vibrant tradition of some fifteen centuries, which in itself demands recognition. It gives the widest range of subject matter of all the art forms remaining to us. It is of singular importance to the people themselves – to wear as their identity in life and to be buried with in death. Moreover, in this enquiry, we are about to see that it is the art and iconography of the seals that drives the art and iconography of all other Aegean media.

Leaving aside for the moment this latter claim, and just taking the overwhelming evidence of the other arguments, why is it that the seals have not hitherto received the attention that they deserve? There may be many answers. No doubt the sheer size and complexity of the seal material constitutes a formidable barrier. Aegean researchers may find that they do not have time to encompass all the seal data in addition to the data of their own speciality. When they do make forays into the glyptic world they encounter specific problems with the material which are often very different from the problems that they are used to encountering in other research fields. This has led to glyptic being seen as the province of seal experts, as a narrow speciality and not really the business of the wider research community. Yet, I would contend that in the Aegean, the seals are everybody's business. Fortunately, the publication of

CMS Volumes and the posting of the CMS Database on the CMS Website make accessibility of the seals possible as never before, and more researchers are taking up the challenge.

The huge amount of glyptic material and its complicated nature aside, there may be other reasons for past neglect, and these reasons may lie in the biases of the modern era. The seals are small – and for many people that means insignificant, not to be regarded as important when measured against great architectural accomplishments and grand wall paintings. Yet this was not, apparently, the view of the Aegeans themselves who held this miniature art form in the highest regard. The seals are personal adornment – jewellery – and there is likely to be a modern gender bias against the seals because of this. Jewellery is perceived as a female interest, not nearly commanding such status as weapons and armour. This may be a particularly 20th and 21st century view where, on dress occasions, a man is allowed a dark suit relieved by a carefully judged tie and wristwatch. However, that was not the case in previous ages when the rich and the royal wore the most sumptuous jewellery. One has only to think of the Elizabethan aristocracy in England, the Ottoman potentates or the Indian princes who regarded their personal presentation of immense importance and expended vast amounts on their jewellery and on the artists who created it. Then there is a telling example from the Bronze Age under discussion here, from Egypt. The jewellery of the Pharaohs is of breathtaking effect for both the richness of the material being worked and the skill of the artists working it. Thus, we need to reflect afresh on the values of the Aegean peoples who expended so much effort on personal display, both in hair styles and clothing⁴⁰, and in adornment like the seal jewels. All of this brings us to the bias of artistic assessment. Western European aesthetes, have, since the time of the rediscovery of the Greek and Roman traditions, consistently placed sculpture and painting at the pinnacle of art⁴¹. Museums, art history books and university lectures perpetuate this by referring to them as the Major Arts. All else is relegated to the Minor Arts with a corresponding lowering of importance. These biases do exist, although rarely are they addressed. So, I make a plea to set them aside and look anew at the seals with eyes that see them as important, as the Bronze Age Aegeans themselves undoubtedly did.

As we now turn now to the organisation of this book some prefatory comments are in order. In ensuring that the focus in this book remains on the seals, discussion of some areas of research interest has necessarily had to be curtailed. Much of the iconographic argument in recent years has been conducted through reference to fresco/wall painting and other media. Where pertinent to the seals, this research is cited in the *footnotes* but otherwise is acknowledged in the extensive Bibliography. For the same reason of concentration on the seal images, there is no systematic comparison with art in the other media in use in the Bronze Age Aegean. To comment on parallels at each point where the seal iconography is discussed would make the book impossibly long. As a recognition of this, at the end of each of Chapters 4 to 10 and Chapter 12, there is a list of five pieces from the other media which share the particular seal iconography discussed in that Chapter, and these act as examples of the myriad other parallels. Then in Chapters 13 and 14, reference is made to the wider artistic scene, and a selection of fresco images is discussed in relation to the seal tradition. Nor does the book attempt a systematic treatment of texts. Mention is made of Hieroglyphic, Linear A and Linear B signs where there is an artistic overlap. The contents of Linear B texts are consulted in some of the interpretation passages. The word, palace, is used as a convenient description for the centres of power in both Crete and Mainland Greece. Minoan and Mycenaean are used throughout simply as convenient summary terms for the two different artistic points of view.

To address the art and meaning of the seal images the book is divided into five sections, and for each section the Plates are an integral part of the exposition and argument. While a whole variety of seal images is included in the Plates, in some cases a particular seal design will be used several times. This

40 Clothing/textiles pieces do not remain for us to study, but the art provides testimony to the fabric detail and to the personal grooming of elaborate hairstyles.

41 In his 1568 work Giorgio Vasari declared the pre-eminence of architecture, sculpture and painting.

is because many seals carry complex compositions with much information encoded within, and each of these details needs discussion at the appropriate point in the appropriate Chapter. The Front Pages open the book with a Preface, Acknowledgements, Abbreviations, two Maps and a Chronological Table. The End Pages complete the book with five Appendices, a Bibliography and an Index. The text sections are as follows.

INTRODUCTION THE AEGEAN SEAL TRADITION

In Chapter 1 the importance of the seals to the Aegean peoples themselves is explained. The seal tradition across fifteen centuries is placed within the wider Aegean Chronology, drawing on the work of the *Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel* (CMS). The particular difficulty of studying art in the Aegean – the absence of translated contemporaneous texts accompanying the images – is then addressed. The use of Iconographic Analysis theory is outlined, and the concept of the *Icon* composition in Aegean art is introduced. The five Iconographic Periods are summarised.

PART 1 THE ART OF THE AEGEAN SEAL

Chapter 2 takes a detailed look at the technical aspects of the art and explains how the exigencies of seal creation shaped the iconography. The *Icon* theory of art is set out in detail, and readers are introduced to the terms of the IconAegean Vocabulary and IconAegean Classification and to the IconAegean Databases which use these terms to describe the Aegean seal images. Chapter 3 describes the advances in artistic design made so early by the Minoan seal artists and discusses the nature of Minoan art within its Bronze Age milieu and within the span of world creativity in art.

PART 2 INTERPRETING AEGEAN SEAL IMAGES

This Part begins the iconographic enquiry proper. In Chapters 4 to 12 the seal images are investigated. Each Chapter takes a single theme and analyses the images which portray its various aspects. First comes the description section where characteristic images are illustrated as examples of these aspects and then discussed in detail, taking care to show the changes in their iconography across the seal sequence. Following this, the text moves to the interpretation section which concentrates on Minoan iconography down to the end of LM IB.

PART 3 UNDERSTANDING THE AEGEAN WORLD

The iconographic investigation continues, taking an holistic view. Chapter 13 discusses what has been learnt of the Minoan world view from the Iconographic Analysis and Interpretation of the seal images down to the end of Minoan High Art. It seeks to define the essence of the Minoan character as revealed in its innovative and idiosyncratic artistic outpouring. Chapter 14 turns to the Mycenaeans and gathers the insights of the Legacy and Late Periods set out in the description sections of Chapters 4 to 12. Changes in the iconography suggest an emerging, and distinctive, Mycenaean point of view.

CONCLUSION THE PRIMACY OF THE SEALS

In Chapter 15 the book ends with a summary of the results of the enquiry and a statement of the value of this book in giving an integrated view of the iconography of the seals. It addresses the role of the seals in the creation of an Aegean artistic koine and the relationship of Aegean art with the long-standing traditions to the east. The significance of the *Icon* composition is revealed.

The Importance of the Seal

Plates 1.1 to 1.102

The Owner, the Artist and the Society

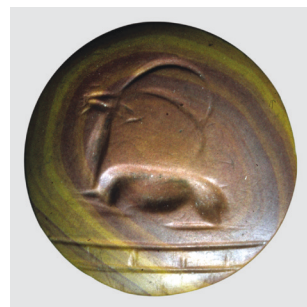
Commissioning the Seal



1.1 – bone
(II.1 18/EM II-EM III)



1.2 – lapis lazuli
(II.2 286a/MM II)



1.3 – veined jasper
(II.3 340/MM III-LM I)

Wearing the Seal



1.4 – red jasper seal
(I 223/LB I-II)



1.5 – b&w detail of 1.4



1.6 – gold signet, detail of 1.21

Impressing the Seal



1.7 – steatite stamp
(II.1 418/MM II)



1.8 – carnelian lentoid
(II.3 64a/LB II-LB IIIA1)



1.9 – packet sealing
(II.7 1/LM I)

The Life of the Sealing



1.10 – sealing, Chania
(VS 1A 142/LM I)



1.11 – sealing, Chania
(VS 1A 175/LM I)



1.12 – sealing, Agia Triada
(II.6 11/LM I)

The Importance of the Seal

The Owner, the Artist and the Society

Carving the Ivory and Soft Stone



1.13 – hippopotamus? ivory figural stamp
(VI 7/EM III-MM IA)



1.14 – hippopotamus ivory stamp cylinder
(II.1 385/EM III-MM IA)



1.15 – steatite three sided prism
(VI 34a/MM II)

Drilling and Shaping the Hard Stone



1.16 – carnelian three sided prism
(VI 96a/MM II)



1.17 – jasper four sided prism
(II.2 316d/MM II)



1.18 – agate lentoid
(VII 102/LB I-LB II)

The Skill of the Goldsmith



1.19 – gold pectolite
(II.2 226/MM II)



1.20 – gold signet, hoop with granulation
(VI 336/ LB II-LB IIIA1)



1.21 – gold signet, bezel
(XI 29/LM I)

Creating the Art and Iconography



1.22 – butterfly, dragonfly
(II.3 237/LM I)



1.23 – wickerwork
(III 127/MM II-MM III)



1.24 – Mistress of Animals
(I 144/LB I-LB II)

The Importance of the Seal

Recording the Seals: the Role of the CMS

Seal



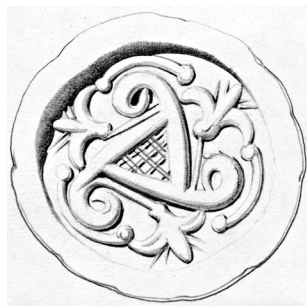
seal



seal face (d 1 cm)



impression



drawing of the impression

1.25 – chalcedony petschaft
(II.1 122/MM II)

Signet Ring



ring bezel and hoop



bezel seal face (l 2.35 cm, w 1.6 cm)



impression



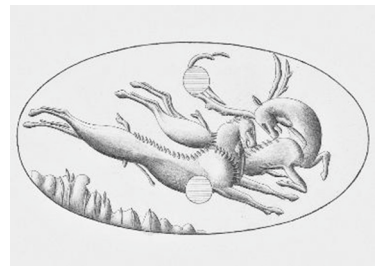
drawing of the impression

1.26 – gold signet
(VI 364/LM I)

Excavated Sealing



original clay sealing (l 2.5 cm, w 1.45 cm)



drawing of the sealing

1.27 – clay sealing
(II.6 70/LM I)

The Importance of the Seal

The Seal Tradition across Fifteen Centuries

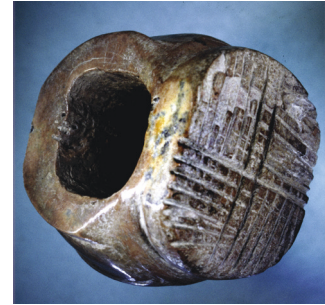
Prepalatial Crete – EM II to MM IA



1.28 – ivory figural stamp
(II.1 249/EM III-MM IA)



1.29 – chlorite pear shaped stamp
(II.1 156/MM I)



1.30 – bone signet
(II.1 179/EM II-EM III)



1.31 – ivory cube
(II.1 64b/EM III-MM IA)



1.32 – ivory stamp cylinder
(II.1 300b/EM III-MM IA)



1.33 – steatite gable
II.2 310/EM III-MM IA)

Protopalatial Crete – MM IB-MM II



1.34 – chlorite stamp
(II.1 349/MM II)



1.35 – steatite pear shaped stamp
(II.1 418/MM II)



1.36 – carnelian half ovoid
(VS 3 41/MM II)



1.37 – steatite three sided prism
(VI 44a/MM II)



1.38 – jasper four sided prism
(II.2 316b/MM II)



1.39 – jasper three sided prism
(VI 92a/MM II)

The Importance of the Seal

The Seal Tradition across Fifteen Centuries

Neopalatial Crete – MM III-LM IB (and influencing the Mainland LH I-LH IIA)



1.40 – chalcidony ring stone
(III 150/MM III-LM I)



1.41 – gold signet
(XI 28/LM I)



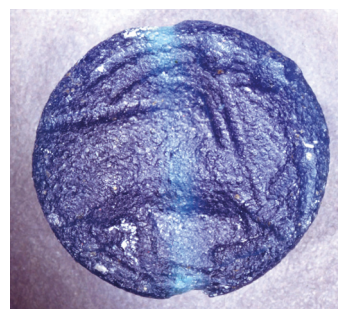
1.42 – carnelian amygdaloid
(VS 1B 275/LM I)



1.43 – lapis lazuli lentoid
(II.3 24/LB I-LB II)



1.44 – clay packet sealing
(II.7 36/LM I)



1.45 – blue glass lentoid
(VI 262/LB I-LB II)

Postpalatial Crete and Mycenaean – LM II-LM III, LH IIB-LH III



1.46 – jasper amygdaloid
(III 375/LM II-LM IIIA1)



1.47 – agate lentoid
(I 167/LB II-LB IIIA1)



1.48 – gold signet
(I 102/LH II-LH IIIA1)



1.49 – lapis lacedaimonius lentoid
(VII 123/LB IIIA1-LB IIIA2)

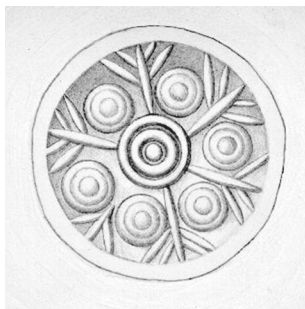


1.50 – steatite lentoid
(I 27/LH IIIA1-LH IIIB)

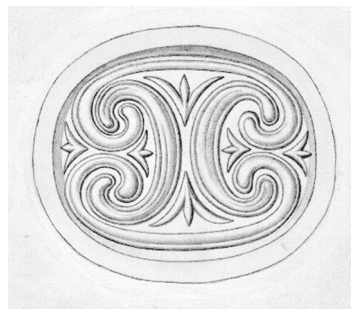


1.51 – steatite lentoid
(I 42/LH IIIA2-LH IIIB)

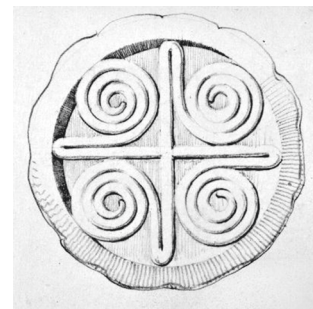
Iconographic Analysis, the *Icon* and the Phaistos Sealings



1.52 – radiation, rosette
(II.5 110/MM II)



1.53 – C spiral, triple bud
(II.5 194/MM II)



1.54 – division 4, coil spiral
(II.5 104/MM II)



1.55 – boar
(II.5 287/MM II)



1.56 – hound head
(II.5 300/MM II)



1.57 – griffin
(II.5 318/MM II)

Iconographic Analysis, the *Icon* and the Phaistos Sealings



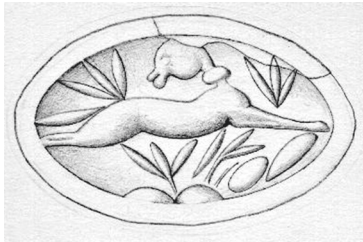
1.58 – lions rampant
(II.5 282/MM II)



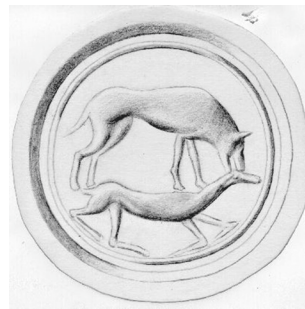
1.59 – human couple
(II.5 324/MM II)



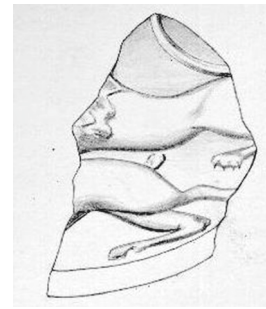
1.60 – holding at bay
(II.5 258/MM II)



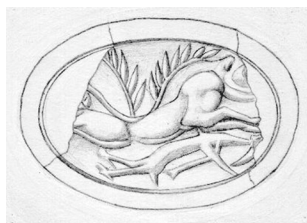
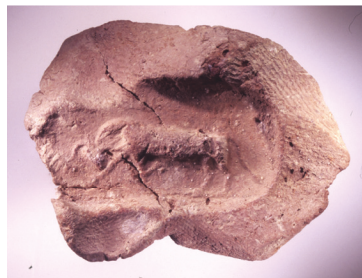
1.61 – hound, flying gallop
(II.5 276/MM II)



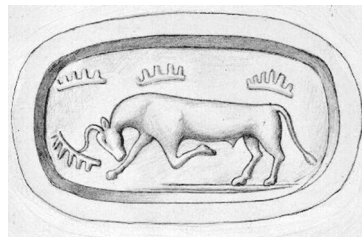
1.62 – hound crunching
(II.5 284/MM II)



1.63 – lion crunching
(II.5 286/MM II)



1.64 – animal attack, flying gallop
(II.5 285/MM II)



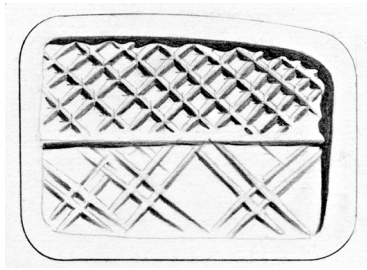
1.65 – bull standing
(II.5 268/MM II)



1.66 – lion, landscape
(II.5 270/MM II)

The Iconographic Sequence across Fifteen Centuries

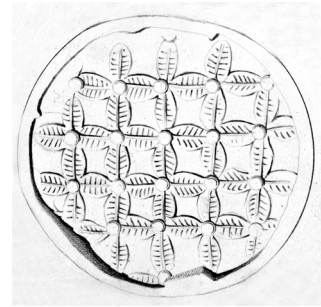
Early Seal Period c.2700 to c.1700



1.67 – wickerwork
(II.1 316/EM II-EM III)



1.68 – petaloid, spiral
(II.1 251b/EM III-MM IA)



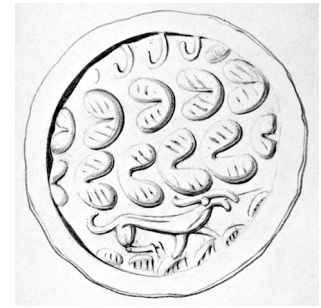
1.69 – quatrefoil pattern
(II.1 241/EM III-MM IA)



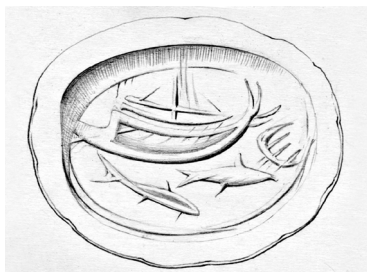
1.70 – scorpion
(II.1 248b/EM II-MM IA)



1.71 – grimi
(II.1 268a/EM III-MM IA)



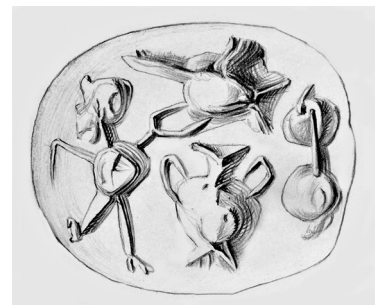
1.72 – dragon
(II.1 295a/EM III-MM IA)



1.73 – ship, dolphin
(II.1 287b/EM III-MM IA)



1.74 – man with weapon
(II.2 164c/MM II)



1.75 – man with vessel
(VI 60c/MM II)

Experimentation Period c.1700 to c.1600



1.76 – animal attack, animal seizing
(II.8 353/MM III-LM I)



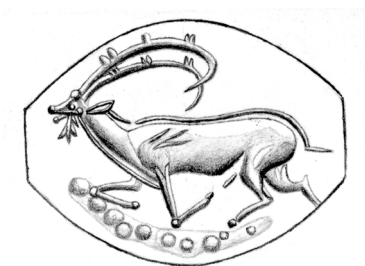
1.77 – dolphin leaping
(VI 182/MM III-LM I)



1.78 – human head profile
(II.3 13a/MM III-LM I)

The Iconographic Sequence across Fifteen Centuries

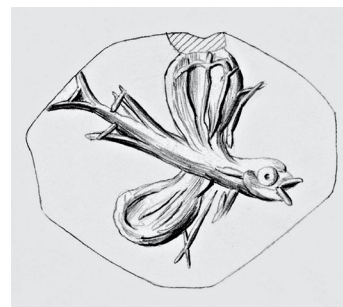
Minoan High Art c.1600 to c.1440



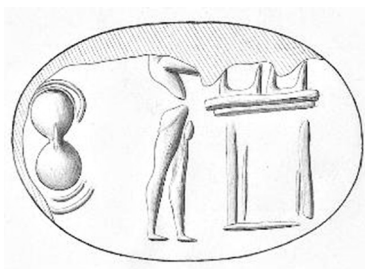
1.79 – animal distressed
(IS 82/LM I)



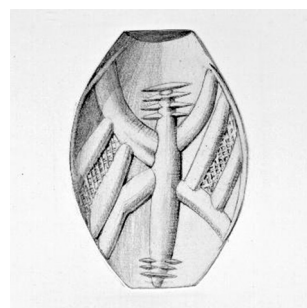
1.80 – animal seizing
(VI 367/LM I-LM II)



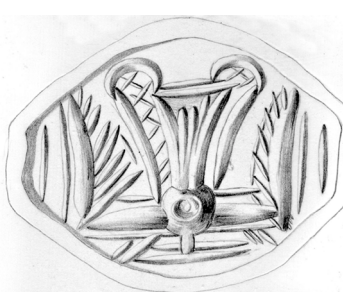
1.81 – flying fish
(VI 462/LM I)



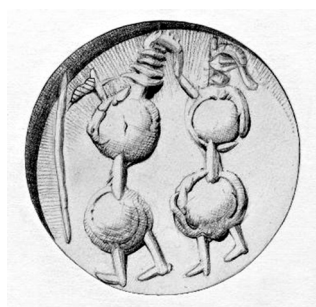
1.82 – eight shield, altar, double horns
(II.8 272/LM I-LM II?)



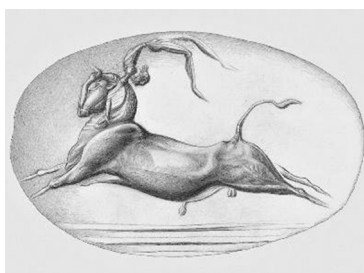
1.83 – double axe
(II.3 235/LM I)



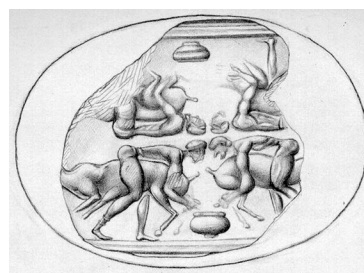
1.84 – vase, double horns
(IV 201/LM I)



1.85 – warrior armed
(II.3 32/LM I)



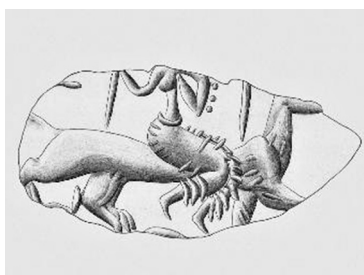
1.86 – leaper somersaulting
(II.6 44/LM I)



1.87 – herders milking
(VS 1A 137/LM I)



1.88 – cultscape
(XI 29/LM I)



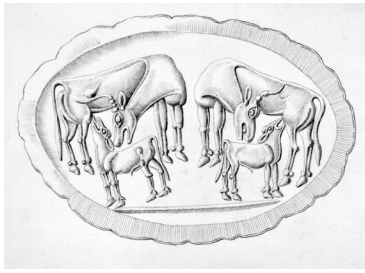
1.89 – Dragon Lady
(II.6 33/LM I)



1.90 – birdwoman
(II.3 4/LM I)

The Iconographic Sequence across Fifteen Centuries

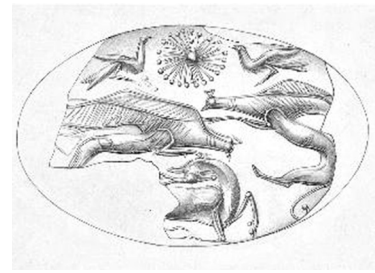
Legacy Period c.1440 to c.1300



1.91 – cows suckling
(I 20/LB II)



1.92 – lion crunching
(I 185/LB II-LB IIIA1)



1.93 – animal attack
(II.8 192/LM IIIA1-LM IIIA2)



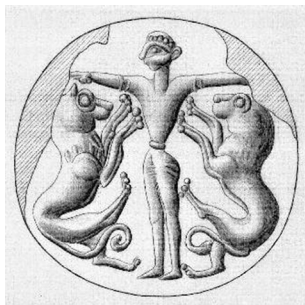
1.94 – serving at the shrine
(I 127/LB II-LB IIIA1)



1.95 – Staff Lord
(V 608/LM IIIA1-LM IIIA2)



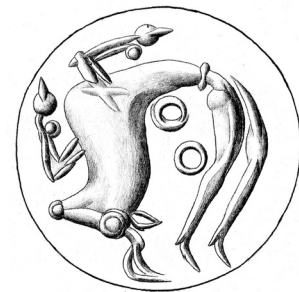
1.96 – Agrimi Lady
(VS 1B 261/LM IIIA1-LM IIIA2)



1.97 – Lion Master (II.8 250/LM IIIA1)



1.98 – griffins
(I 98/LB II-LB IIIA1)



1.99 – bullman
(VS 3 150/LM II-LM IIIA1)

Late Period c.1300 to c.1200



1.100 – quadruped
(V 383/LH IIIA1-LH IIIB)



1.101 – bull, branch
(VS 3 180/LH IIIA2-LH IIIB)



1.102 – man
(I 195/LH IIIA2-LH IIIB)

PART 1

THE ART OF THE AEGEAN SEAL

Chapter 2 The *Icon* and its Iconographic Vocabulary

In this Chapter the aim is to look at the challenges that artists faced in creating images to fit within the particular shape of the seal face and then at the mind games they played to transform ideas into images within this small compass.

Miniature Art: the Size and Shape of the Seal Face (Plates 2.1 to 2.24)

The tourist visitors to the Herakleion Museum must have wondered, as they looked at the seal and the drawing provided beside it, how the seal artists put that image on to the small seal face that they were viewing. In Chapter 1 we noted the size of some seals, but let us now spend a little time trying to comprehend just how small the seal face actually is. For each seal face in examples 2.1 to 2.24, measurements are listed in centimetres (cm), length x width. The smallest are 2.3 measuring 1.2 cm x 1.2 cm and 2.8 measuring 1.5 cm x 0.6 cm. The largest are 2.16 measuring 2.9 cm x 1.5 cm and 2.24 measuring 2.8 cm x 1.8 cm. There are even larger seals with the magnificent Dendra Lentoid as in 1.92 and 14.20 measuring 4.1 cm x 3.9 cm and the bezel of the great Mycenae Ring as in 14.55 measuring 3.4 cm x 2.5 cm. To try to fully appreciate the artist working at this miniature level, run a ruler over the illustrations 2.1 to 2.24 and compare those measurements with the ones listed below each seal face. They are up to twice the size of the original! It has often been surmised that the seal artists must have had some means of magnification to work so successfully at this miniature level. However, it is likely that the artists' own excellent eyesight and good light from the Aegean sunshine were sufficient¹. Now that we know just how small the seals actually are, is it permissible to show the seal face enlarged about one and a half to two times the original? In order to study the images we need to enlarge them so that we can easily discuss their intricate iconography and, so long as we keep in mind that we are talking about items the size of your thumbnail, or the stone in a pretty dress ring, or the modest-sized watch face on your wrist, the magnification can be seen as permissible. It is a tribute to the skill of the seal artists that their images still work when substantially enlarged in print or even enlarged more to huge expanse when projected onto a wall-sized screen for lectures.

After confronting the miniature size of the seal, the artists must rise to their next challenge: working within the shape of the seal face. The figural prepalatial seals can show a variety of face shapes depending on the animal or item that forms the seal itself, as with the base of the boar head in 2.1, the little owl in 1.13 and the monkey in 1.28. When the seal form is the top pointed section of the hippopotamus tusk then the seal face is roughly circular. If the tusk is sliced horizontally then two roughly circular seal faces of slightly different diameters are provided as in 2.2. With the petschaft, the seal face is the base and that is circular as in 2.3. Further developments ensured that most seal faces came to assume regular geometric shapes as seen in the representative examples 2.4 to 2.24 where the circle, oval and rectangle are clear. However, for the composition of the design it is important also to register the orientation of the shape; so the oval and the rectangle need to be named as horizontal or vertical. There is an additional shape

¹ The assessment of Ingo Pini, private communication. No evidence of magnifying equipment remains but then there is no evidence of seal-cutting equipment from the period either. The earliest illustration in the Aegean of a bow drill is the image on a tombstone of the 2ndc CE, AS, Fig. 5.1a. Other illustrations show a version of the lathe powered by a bow used by traditional craftsmen in India, 5.1b, and modern electric lathe equipment, 5.1c.

belonging to the cylinder seal as in 2.29 which marks the shape of the design when rolled out, named the rectangle rolled. This is a rectangle with defined upper and lower edges but no defined ends to mark the two smaller edges since the seal can be rolled continuously. This shape is rarely seen because the cylinder seal is not an indigenous creation but a copying of the (originally) Mesopotamian form. A diagram of the seal face shapes is provided in *Fig. 1*². The face shapes are discussed through the eight most characteristic seal forms providing those shapes: petschaft, three sided prism, four sided prism, lentoid, amygdaloid, cushion, signet and cylinder seal.

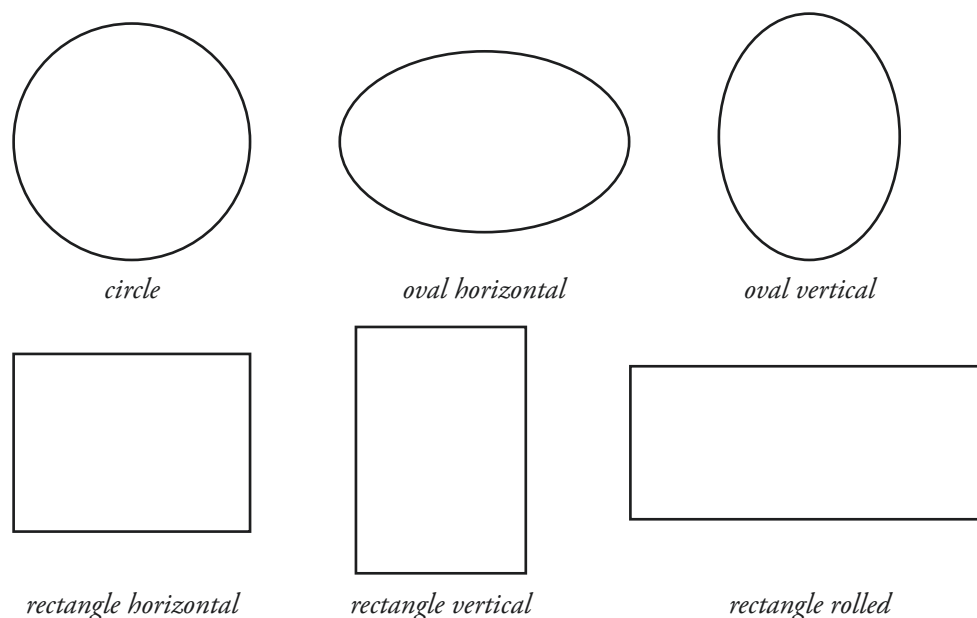


Fig. 1 Seal Face Shapes

The **petschaft** is the simple stamp seal with a rounded handle containing the perforation for the suspension cord as in 2.3. The handle is regularly shaped with rings below the suspension hole. Overall, the elegant form of the petschaft provides a seal face in the shape of a **circle** as in the lovely chalcedony pieces in 2.3 and 1.25 and the gold example in 1.19. The petschaft is in favour in MM II.

The **three sided prism** is a prism with the string hole through the long axis emerging at each triangular end as in the steatite example 2.4. The three sides for the seal faces are usually in the shape of an oval but the oval is not like a true ellipse but rather more like a rectangle with the corners rounded and, on occasions, can be almost circular. The design is worked as an **oval horizontal** in each of the three seal faces of the steatite examples 2.5 to 2.7, and similar examples are found in 2.39, 2.40, 1.15, 1.16 and 1.39. The design may also be worked as an **oval vertical** as in 1.37 and 6.60. The three sided prism is in favour in MM II.

The **four sided prism** is a prism with the string hole through the long axis emerging at each square end as in the gold example 2.8. Each of the four seal faces is a **rectangle** with the design usually worked as a **rectangle horizontal**, especially when hieroglyphic signs are the subject as in the four faces of the green jasper example 2.9 to 2.12. Other examples are 2.53, 1.17 and 1.38. The design can also be worked as a **rectangle vertical** as with the figurative subjects in 6.62 and 12.31. The four sided prism is in favour in MM II.

The **lentoid**, so called because the seal itself takes the form of a lens, has its seal face in the shape of a **circle** as in the chlorite, carnelian and dark green jasper examples 2.13 to 2.15. The string hole is bored across a diameter, and sometimes gold finials are set to protect the string hole as in 1.8. The lentoid may

² This diagram was first presented in IAS, 14-15.

also be placed within a gold setting as in 1.43. These gold embellishments serve to underline the precious nature of the seal. Other lentoid examples are 2.28, 2.30, 2.35, 2.37, 2.46, 1.18, 1.22, 1.24 and 1.47. The lentoid comes into favour in LM I and remains a popular seal form.

The **amygdaloid**, so called because the seal form is like an almond, has a seal face in the shape of an **oval** as in the haematite, carnelian and green jasper examples 2.16 to 2.18. The string hole is bored through the long axis, and the ends of the oval may be cut off where the string hole emerges, no doubt to provide stronger ends where the wear of the string would be most damaging. The amygdaloid oval is close to the pure ellipse shape. The design may be worked with the **oval vertical** as in 2.16 and 12.32 or with the **oval horizontal** as in 2.17, 2.18, 1.42 and 1.46. A particularly rich example is the gold amygdaloid with gold finials 2.36. The amygdaloid also comes into favour in LM I and continues into the following period.

The **cushion** is so named because it is somewhat like a square cushion. The seal face is in the shape of a **rectangle** where the string hole is bored through the long axis as in the green stone, steatite/gold and chalcedony examples 2.19 to 2.21. The length and width measurements often do not differ very much, and consequently the effect is usually more of a square as in 2.20. Extra richness is provided by overlaying the stone with gold foil as in 2.20³ and by capping the stone with gold band finials as in 2.21. Working the whole cushion in gold creates a stunning effect as in the three cushions from the Shaft Graves 2.32, 2.34 and 2.58 and the Pylos cushion 2.44. All these seals have the design worked **rectangle horizontal** but examples 3.37, 12.60 and 12.170 have the design worked **rectangle vertical**. The cushion comes into favour in MM III and continues into later periods.

The **signet** ring is known from the earliest times made of bone or hippopotamus ivory with a rounded seal face as in 1.30⁴. Later signets were made in precious metal, regularly gold but sometimes silver. The bezel is set at right angles to the hoop. This bezel provides a seal face in the shape of an oval as in 2.23 although a few are in the shape of a circle as in 2.22 and 2.50. The oval shape is close to an ellipse with some faces “fatter” as in 2.65 and some later ones more elongated as in 2.60. A silver ring is seen in 2.50 and gold examples are 2.22, 2.23, 2.26, 2.33, 1.26, 1.41 and 1.48. There are also examples of signets carved from a single piece of stone as with the red jasper example showing a Lion Master 2.24, the chalcedony signet with cows suckling 1.91 and the agate signet with an agrimia chariot scene 12.187. All these signets have the design worked oval horizontal. If the sealings in 1.10 and 12.138 were impressed by a signet they are examples of an oval vertical design. Then there is the rare example 2.22 where the design is organised by a coil spiral. The gold signets come into favour in MM III and continue into LM and LH times.

The **cylinder seal** takes the shape of a cylinder with the design worked around the circumference surface so that when the cylinder is rolled out it gives a rectangle with hard top and bottom but fluid edges so that the rolling can continue. Examples include the translucent agate cylinder with gold finials 2.29, 12.155 and 12.157. There are relatively few examples of cylinder seals and most are LM or LB.

There are various other seal forms which come into favour at different times like the pear-shaped stamp seals 1.7 and 1.29, the discoid 1.23, and also the stamp cylinder, conoid, quader and cube. However, in each of these cases the seal face is one of the shapes set out in *Fig. 1*.

Searching for the Essence: the *Icon* (Plates 2.25 to 2.36)

Now that we have some appreciation of the challenges that the size and shape of the seal face present to the artist we can turn to the challenge of depicting the subject matter. From the very beginning there is a distinct Minoan point of view.

3 The image here is 90° turned to the left from the CMS mounting as this view has the dolphins in the characteristic leaping down pose rather than swimming into the rocks.

4 Termed stempelring in the CMS.

Consider the images they create of the animals closest to them, the agrimi, hound, stag and boar. The agrimi, the Cretan wild goat, is one of the most popular subjects in all periods. The artist portrays the agrimi with characteristic features and in characteristic poses so that the true nature of the animal is conveyed to us. For the male agrimi the great statement of its identity is the magnificent pair of curved and knobbed horns, but the variety of life episodes depicted give a fuller picture of all agrimia. They are seen resting as in 2.25 and 1.3, standing as in 1.31 and 1.71 and coursing along in flying gallops or flying leaps as in 2.29 and 1.27. They are shown in mating and suckling scenes as in 2.26 and 2.27 and in animal attack and hunt scenes where they are the seized prey as in 2.29 and 1.76 and the wounded quarry as in 1.79. Each image is a graphic statement of some essential characteristic of the agrimi, its body shape, its ability to run and leap, its virility and its tenderness with its young. Taken altogether they give us the full understanding of the agrimi as a particular animal different from all others. It is the same with the hound, another great favourite of the Minoans. The characteristic shape is clear in the early seals, with its long tail being one of the main identifying features, curled upright in 1.35. The hound may sit or stand or scratch as in 2.46, and its characteristic cooling method of panting is marked in the open mouth and lolling tongue of 1.56. There is no need to read the teeth and protruding tongue as indicating aggression and hence a wolf, as has often been proposed. It is simply someone's favourite mastiff hound panting. The bitch suckles its young as in 6.82 and cares for its nearby young as well. Puppies play together in 6.81. In action the hound courses at full stretch as it runs through a rocky landscape in 1.61 or as it chases and seizes its quarry in 2.29. It bends up or down to secure its quarry as in 1.62 and 1.76 or leaps up to hold its quarry at bay as in 1.60. Almost always the hound is shown with its collar, thus indicating that it belongs to its master. To accompany its master to the hunt is its highest calling and the hunter master with his trusty hound beside him regularly makes a stunning picture as in 2.35. Those other denizens of the forest, the stag and the boar, are also shown in characteristic shape and pose. For the stag, its identifying characteristic is the set of antlers, featured for the red deer in 1.16 and shown in clear detail for the fallow deer in 1.46 and 2.28. The doe suckles its young in 6.23. The stag's active life is concentrated in its role as the prey of violent predators where its body is either contorted or stretched in great suffering as in 2.28 and 1.46. The boar is always immediately recognisable with its distinct snout and heavy body with upright back bristles as in 1.55. The sow may suckle young as in 6.29. In action the boar's main role is as the hunter's quarry where it is a most dangerous foe. The tusks are clearly shown in the confrontation in 2.35. So, as we see, each animal shape is carefully distinguished by body mass and genus specifics. One or two of these characteristics may be somewhat exaggerated seemingly as a key marker of the particular animal, the great curved horns of the agrimi, the raised tail and/or panting mouth of the hound, the varied antler shape of the stag, and the back bristles and/or tusks of the boar. Yet much is also revealed in the characteristic behaviour they share. So, the artist portrays the speed of the agrimi and the stag and their suffering as they are prey/quarry brought down by their predator/hunter, as well as the tenderness of the mother nurturing her young, applying equally to agrimi, doe, bitch and sow. We can only deduce that the artist is striving for something more than simply an identifiable image of each animal. They are trying to express their essence. This is the Minoan artistic vision.

Consider now the images of men fighting or hunting. In examples 2.31 to 2.36 the men are all shown at their prime, their muscling especially clear with the minimal dress of the belt and kilt of the Minoan male (sometimes with codpiece or simple shorts shown as well). The weapons and armour are carefully detailed – spear, sword, scabbard, plumed helmet, boar tusk helmet, and eight shield or tower shield. Yet it is not the detail that arrests the viewer. It is the face-to-face combat! This is a duel to the death! This is the climactic point of the fatal blow! In each image two magnificent adversaries face each other. In the war images they are warrior heroes while in the hunt images they are a hunter hero and a great beast raised to the stature of hunter hero by its size, ferocity and ability to kill. In the war duelling image there is a warrior victor who drives his weapon home and a warrior vanquished who falls away dying. In 2.31 and 2.33 there is the additional figure of a warrior fallen, his body stricken and suffering and unable to rise. In the hunt duelling images of 2.34 and 2.35, the victor is the hunter hero but even as he defeats the great lion or the ferocious boar he can suffer grievous wounds from claws, teeth or tusks. In

2.36 it is the great bull who is the victor. Even as it is caught in the tensioned net, it tramples and gores the unfortunate hunter whose crumpled body as hunter fallen is a parallel to the warrior fallen figures of the war scenes. In all depictions the artist does not allow any extraneous detail to detract from the confrontation of the duel. In 2.31, 2.32, 2.34 and 2.35 there is no background at all while in 2.33 and 2.36 there is only the framing of the glen motif or the necessary introduction of a tree so that the net which ensnares the bull can be anchored. Now, there are many ways to depict warfare or the hunt. The army may march out to war or begin the battle charge. The warrior king may be shown triumphing over his opponents or even sacrificing his prisoners after the battle. Hunters may pursue their quarry and slay it by missile fired from afar or may cunningly ambush their quarry or drive multiple animals into a corral for easy dispatch. Rarely, if ever, is the warrior/king/hunter in any real danger. However, this is not the Minoan vision. While there are images of warriors marching out to battle or driving their chariots, it is in the duelling scenes that the essence of conflict in war and the hunt is starkly imaged. By rendering the duel at its climactic point, the heroism of the duellers, man or animal, is fully revealed. They face death, and only one will survive, and even then this survivor may suffer terrible wounds. This is the essence of bravery in war and the hunt.

Through these two examples of animal life and men duelling we can see that Minoans are trying to encapsulate the essential nature of the thing, the virility and life force of the animal and the drama of striking the fatal blow in a duel. This endeavour of distilling the essence results in the creation of the *Icon*, the memorable image, and it is in the seals that the *Icon* is developed. The two constraints on the artist, the small size of the seal and the shape of the seal face, actually facilitate the concentration inherent in the *Icon* concept. The *Icon* theory of Aegean art was first proposed in a trilogy of *Aegaeum* papers as the Thalassa Theory since it was first argued through the example of depicting the sea⁵. It has more recently been explained through the images of the bull sports in my book, *The Iconography of Aegean Seals* (IAS). There, the process of creating the *Icon* is given an extended exposition⁶.

“The creation of an icon begins with the point of view for the composition being the artist’s own eye (through which we can also see), a point of view which gives Aegean representational art its essential humanism. The crafting of the icon then proceeds through a creative sequence of initial image, essential image and elaborate image to the completed memorable image, always allowing flexibility for the individual artist to change details and create a unique seal design. The initial image is the eidetic image registered by the artist: the natural shape of human and animal figures at rest and in movement, of plants and buildings. The artist then works on the initial eidetic image with its characteristic shape to extract the essence of the subject and this is the essential image: the tenderness of suckling animals, the violence of an animal attack, the courage to fight a duel. Finally the artist works on this essential image to make it as clear as possible and fit it into the seal shape, thus producing the elaborate image; the leaper somersaulting, the flying gallop of an animal attacking, the antithetical group. The result of this sequential overworking of the images is the memorable image, the icon, immediately accessible to the viewer, partly because the viewer’s eye easily takes the point of view of the artist’s eye but also because of the enhancing of the image by the artist’s skill. Explaining the composition of seal designs as the sequential overworking of images helps the viewer of the composition and the reader of the seals to understand the complexity and richness of the icon. In practice, however, the point of view of the artist and the three steps of composition are possibly not so separate. The artist takes his point of view by surveying the scene and deciding on the particular aspect to be highlighted in the composition. The artist’s eye intuitively responds to the shape and movement of the eidetic imprint while the mind decides what effects are needed to extract the essence of the subject and the trained

5 Crowley 1989a, 203-214, 1991, 219-230 and 1992, 23-37, where it was argued as a comprehensive theory after paying tribute to the early iconographers, Henriette Gronweger-Frankfort, Henri van Effenterre, Emily Townsend Vermeule and Gisela Walberg.

6 IAS, 15-17.

hand immediately knows which elaboration to apply. The icon is the compositional imperative of Aegean glyptic art. The icon theory is a comprehensive theory of Aegean glyptic design, distilled from the material itself and, as such, provides an accurate description of the many aspects of this sophisticated art.”

At this earlier stage of my thinking, I proposed that the *Icon* was developed in two stages: an earlier proto-icon stage where single subjects were depicted and the full-icon stage where the artist began to portray the whole scene as a unit. However, I now consider that this is a somewhat arbitrary division and so I identify all these memorable images from the Early Seal Period as *Icons*, recognising that the changes seen in the Phaistos Sealings mark the time when the full potential of the *Icon* composition began to be realised. This is when the artists took the whole scene as the eidetic image and re-envisioned the *Icon* to depict the essence of the activity and the essence of place⁷.

In the *Icon* composition we see a beautiful meeting of the mind of the artist and the shape and size of the seal face. In fashioning the *Icon* through the three phases of its creative sequence of initial image, essential image and elaborate image to achieve the completed memorable image there is, of necessity, a summarising and an extracting to grasp the essence. Its naissance is in the Minoan seal artists’ point of view where the artists, seeing the shape of the subject before them, also see its underlying structure, and infuse this insight into their designs. The Minoans are the impressionists of shape⁸. The centrality of the *Icon* for artistic and iconographic composition can hardly be overestimated. The seal artists created 125 *Icons* to express their point of view, and these *Icons* organise their chosen subject matter. The *Icon* is the compositional imperative of Minoan seal design and, eventually, of all Aegean art.

The IconAegean Databases: IconADict and IconAegean

So, what are these *Icons*? Do they have names? Does every detail of their depiction and composition have a name? No doubt they all had Minoan names in the long-distant past but, as we have seen, we have a problem in the Aegean in that there are no contemporary associated texts to provide descriptions. Accordingly, we must create a vocabulary and classification to enable precision in the discussion of Aegean art. Yet, how to do it? Any attempt to force the images into a Procrustean bed of some pre-conceived 20th or 21st century CE schema would be disastrous. It is of the utmost importance that such vocabulary and classification evolve out of the material itself, and that has been my guiding philosophy over the years⁹. The other guiding precept that has been my constant companion is the need to do justice to both the extent and the subtlety of the iconography. The vocabulary and classification must be broad enough to encompass the wide variety of subject matter but at the same time nuanced enough to reveal the sophistication of the image creation. So, for many years I have been working to create just such a comprehensive yet nuanced vocabulary for iconographic discussion (in English) and to use it in a classification for the seal images which can be presented in user-friendly databases for easy searching. This work has resulted in the IconAegean Vocabulary and IconAegean Classification and in the IconAegean Databases. These were introduced to the scholarly community in trial versions across several CMS Symposia¹⁰ and through the CMS Website.

7 See the discussion of the Phaistos sealing images as the pivot of change, Chapter 1 above.

8 See the discussion on impressionism in Chapter 3 below.

9 The dangers of the “Procrustean bed” have been the subject of many a discussion with Ingo Pini in the Great Room of the seal impressions in Marburg, fondly remembered by both of us.

10 Crowley and Adams CMS B5, 39-58 and Crowley CMS B6, 15-26.

The trial versions initially comprised two Databases, IconADict and IconADData. Extensive work has seen the Databases revised through several iterations from Versions 1.0 to 1.3. In the original IconADData Database, 1000 seals were chosen to illustrate the range of image iconography. The entries in the dictionary database, IconADict,

<https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/fakultaeten/philosophie/zaw/cms/index.html>. They were further explained in my book, *The Iconography of Aegean Seals*, and now reach their full exposition in this sequel volume and in the updated versions of the IconAegean Databases. There are two Databases, IconADict and IconAegean. They are created in *FileMaker Pro*¹¹ and their updated versions are being released in conjunction with this book. The Parameters for creating the IconAegean Databases are set out in Appendix 1. They deal with the problems encountered in trying to describe the images as carefully and as economically as possible in the absence of contemporary vocabulary. As you read the Parameters you will see that several of them directly address the problems outlined in Chapter 1, like avoiding anachronistic terms and emotive descriptions.

The **IconADict Database** (Dict for Dictionary) sets out and defines the 590 terms in the IconAegean Vocabulary and these terms are also the Key Words for searching the Databases. The terms are listed here in Appendix 2, alphabetically along with their Classification fields. In the IconADict Database each term is given one page for the definition and a seal image is provided to illustrate the usage. The definitions include comparisons with other images within the selected 1000 seals of the IconADict Database by referring to their IconADict number. In Plates 2.37 and 2.38 the term VIP (Very Important Person) is used in the description of the image. In the IconADict Database the definition of the term VIP is given as it applies to Aegean iconography. A print-out of the VIP definition is provided as Appendix 3. IconADict also contains entries to explain how to use the two Databases and presents the Parameters controlling the creation of the two Databases as mentioned above.

The **IconAegean Database** holds the seals published so far by CMS and places all the 10,972 seal face images within the IconAegean Classification, one seal face image to a page in the Data View layout. The one-page data entry provides the seal image as a drawing of the impression, a long text entry as the IconAegean Classification and a shorter text entry as the CMS Record which draws on the CMS publications to list the main features of the seal and its provenance. Within the IconAegean Classification section the vocabulary which provides the iconographic description of the seal images is employed in an hierarchical schema of five fields: Category, Theme, *Icon*, Element and Syntax. It became very clear early in the creation of the Classification that a one- or two-line description would not do justice to the subtlety of the iconography and so an hierarchical schema based on the *Icon* was devised. Through examples 2.37 to 2.54 below an explanation is provided of just how the Classification works to describe each seal image.

It is easy to **Search the Databases**. Both the IconADict and IconAegean Databases have been designed to be as user-friendly as possible, allowing for the amount of material incorporated and the sophisticated iconography. The use of the 590 Vocabulary terms as Key Words and the one-page Data View layout of the IconAegean Classification facilitate access through the Find command of *FileMaker Pro*. In the IconADict Database, the Find command will call up a blank Data View layout with the various fields outlined, and the User can type in the vocabulary term in the Key Word field and then, on pressing Perform Find, the entry being sought will appear. Similarly, in the IconAegean Database the File command will call up a blank page with the various fields outlined, and the User can type in the vocabulary term in the appropriate field of the five Classification fields available, and then, on pressing Perform Find, the entry being sought will appear. As an additional searching aid, pop-up menus in each field suggest the vocabulary terms the User may wish to try. The popup menus list the 590 terms in the IconAegean Vocabulary in their appropriate Classification fields totalling 10 Category, 25 Theme, 125 *Icon*, 340 Element and 90 Syntax fields. The IconAegean Database is still a work in progress but the first three fields, Category, Theme and *Icon*, are complete, and searches across these fields will yield accurate

continue to use these 1000 images to illustrate and explain the terms used, but the IconADict Database itself has been discontinued now that the IconAegean Database has been developed in the same format, and it contains all the CMS published seals.

¹¹ *FileMaker Pro* is a relational database application from Claris International. Its initial release was in 1985 and it now provides for ease of customising one's own database.

assemblages of images. The seals are entered in the IconAegean Database in the order in which they are published in the CMS. Users can search for any particular seal by using the Find command to call up the field outlines and then entering the CMS number in the CMS Number field in the CMS Record section. Users can also find seals with particular characteristics like shape or material or by provenance by entering the queried term in the appropriate field outline. Moreover, Users can make use of the Sort command to organise entries in any of the iconographic or CMS fields. It is most useful to Sort on the IconA Code field in the IconAegean Classification section. This sorting process is rather like allowing all the pages in the CMS Volumes with one seal to a page to float up in the air and then settle back down into iconographic order. It is all much easier in the IconAegean Database where the *Filemaker Pro* command Sort assembles the seal images in iconographic order, and Users may then scroll through them to gain a new appreciation of the iconography through this direct access. Placing all 10,972 CMS images in iconographic order is a first for Aegean iconography.

The IconAegean Vocabulary and the IconAegean Classification (Plates 2.37 to 2.54)

In order to help readers of this book and users of the IconAegean Databases to understand how to use the IconAegean Vocabulary and the IconAegean Classification, we take the eighteen seal images, 2.37 to 2.54, as examples. The discussion here proceeds on the premise that the reader knows the IconAegean Vocabulary or consults the IconADict Database to become familiar with the naming and usage of the terms. We do a step-by-step classification of the images 2.37 and 2.38 so as to set out the Data View layout for each in the IconAegean Database and then do a quick summary of the classification of the images 2.39 to 2.54 in order to show the variety of descriptions available across the iconographic repertoire. We then make a step-by-step search of the IconAegean Database on some selected terms to show how to find comparable material.

The *Icon*, the memorable image, is the compositional imperative of Aegean glyptic art and constitutes the artistic core of the IconAegean Classification. Identifying the *Icon* begins the Classification process. Once the *Icon* of the image is identified it can be listed in the *Icon* field. Attention then turns to the components of the *Icon*. The fusion of eidetic/essential/elaborate images which creates the *Icon* finds its expression in the two component database descriptions set out in the Element field (the individual motifs and their detail) and the Syntax field (how the motifs are organised). The next step is to see where the *Icon* fits in the overall subject matter of the iconography repertoire. There are thematic considerations, and the *Icon* field entry can be filed in the appropriate Theme field. Once this is done the *Icon* field and Theme field can be placed within even larger groupings of the Category field. Thus, the hierarchical classification is complete. This five-field filing is extremely useful to the iconographer. It immediately identifies each image by its *Icon* which is its artistic core and then gives component detail. Yet, it also allows larger groupings of subject matter to be easily assembled.

In 2.37, the seal, CMS I 223, and the drawing of its impression are shown. Working with the drawing of the impression, as is the protocol for discussing the iconography of seal images, and using the IconAegean Vocabulary, we begin with the *Icon* field¹² and then work through the other fields to file the descriptions in the Data View layout. The *Icon* is VIP with familiar and refers to an elite human figure and the term familiar refers to an identifying animal accompanying the VIP¹³.

We first identify and list the *Icon* as:

VIP with familiar

We then list the Element constituents of the *Icon* as:

VIP as Griffin Lord, wearing diagonal robe, griffin as familiar, wearing cord as collar

12 The term *Icon* is used in Italics when referring to the concept and the theory as well as the *Icon* field of the Databases. The other field names of Category, Theme, Element and Syntax are rendered in plain text.

13 Search the IconADict Database in the Key Word field on VIP, familiar and VIP with familiar.

and leash,
triple line as groundline

We then list the Syntax organisation of the *Icon* as:

circle, focus,
Lord front centre, standing profile to left, arm bent to waist holding cord tied into a collar
around the griffin's neck,
griffin back centre, statant to left, wings elevated, head erect regardant,
groundline below

Returning to the information contained in the core of the iconographic description, the *Icon* field and its component Element and Syntax fields, we may now draw on this information to make the appropriate entry for the image in the Theme and Category fields.

We file the image in the Theme field as

symbolic

because it has features beyond those appearing in the real world.

We file the image in the Category field as

human figures

because the *Icon* contains a human figure with detailed features and clothing.

The pertinent details of the *Icon*, Element and Syntax field descriptions for CMS I 223 are listed in summary as the caption below 2.37. The full IconAegean Classification for CMS I 223 is shown as Appendix 4. This is a print-out of the Data View layout page from the IconAegean Database.

In 2.38, the sealing, CMS II.8 268, and the drawing of its image are shown¹⁴. To classify the image we repeat the steps described above. Working with the drawing of the impression and using the IconAegean Vocabulary, we begin with the *Icon* field and then work through the other fields. The *Icon* is VIP granting audience and the action records an elite seated personage allowing figures of lesser status to approach. The *Icon* of gesturing, where figures use standard gestures, is added.

We first identify and list the *Icons* as:

VIP granting audience, gesturing

We then list the Element constituents of the *Icons* as:

VIP as Great Lady, as Seated Lady, of large size, wearing flounced pants, as gesturer,
giving heart
gesture and reaching gesture,
tiered shrine topped by double horns as Lady's seat,
woman as server, wearing flounced pants, as bearer, holding skyphos,
woman as server, wearing flounced pants, as bearer, holding unknown item,
rocky ground as glen

We then list the Syntax organisation of the *Icon* as:

oval horizontal, stage, cultscape,
Lady VIP right granting audience to server, sitting combination to left on second tier of shrine
far right, arm bent across breast, arm bent out gesturing,
woman server bearer centre, standing profile to right facing Lady, arms bent out to right offering
skyphos to Lady,
woman bearer left, standing profile to left, arms bent out holding item,
rocky glen above

¹⁴ There are several sealings allowing a composite drawing of the whole seal image.

Returning to the information contained in the core of the iconographic description, the *Icon* field and its component Element and Syntax fields, we may now draw on this information to make the appropriate entry for the image in the Theme and Category fields.

We file the image in the Theme field as

symbolic

because it has features beyond those appearing in the real world.

We file the image in the Category field as

human figures

because the main *Icon* contains a human figure with detailed features and clothing.

The pertinent details of the *Icon*, Element and Syntax field descriptions are listed in summary as the caption below 2.38. The full details may be found in the Data View layout page of the IconAegean Database under its CMS number, CMS II.8 268.

The remaining images 2.39 to 2.54 also note under their illustrations the pertinent terms in their *Icon*, Element and Syntax description while the full entry can be viewed in the Data View layout of the IconAegean Database. They follow the same classification procedure.

In 2.39, the *Icon* field is man carrying loads. The detail of Element and Syntax will cause it to be filed within the peaceful activities Theme field, and because it contains a human figure without detailed features or clothing the image will need to be filed in the Category field, stylised human figures.

In 2.40 the *Icon* field is sailing ship. The detail of Element and Syntax reveals size and complexity and so places the image within the major constructions Theme field, and because it shows something made by human hands the image will need to be filed in the Category field, human artefacts.

In 2.41, the *Icon* field is special object. The Element detail of double axe shows a relatively small item which could be made and carried by one human being. So, it is filed in the minor constructions Theme, and because it shows something made by human hands it belongs in the Category field, human artefacts.

In 2.42 the *Icon* field is special object. The detail of Element and Syntax shows the eight shield and cloak knot which are associated with war and the hunt and so they go in the war equipment Theme field. Because they are items made by human hands the image needs to be filed in the Category field, human artefacts.

In 2.43, the *Icon* field is hybrid woman. The detail of Element and Syntax places the image in the hybrid humans Theme, and because it shows a creature of fantasy in its fusion of features the image needs to be filed in the Category field, fantastic creations.

In 2.44, the *Icon* field is animal resting. The detail of Element and Syntax places the image in the animal study Theme field, and because the creature is not a real animal but a griffin then it must be filed in the Category field, fantastic creations.

In 2.45, the *Icon* field is animal parts plus. The detail of Element and Syntax places the image in the Zakros fantasy Theme field, and because it shows a fantasy combination it needs to be filed in the Category field, fantastic creations.

In 2.46, the *Icon* field is animal scratching. The detail of Element and Syntax places the image within the animal study Theme field, and because the Element detail names a hound then it is filed in the Category field, fauna.

In 2.47, the *Icon* field is animal tethered. The detail of Element and Syntax places the image in the animal study Theme, and because the Element description names a bull then it is filed in the Category field, fauna.

In 2.48, the *Icon* field is dolphin leaping. The detail of Element and Syntax places the image within the sea creature study Theme field and within the Category field, sea life.

In 2.49, the *Icon* field is single flora. The detail of Element and Syntax places the image within the floral Theme field, and the Element description rosette flower requires the image to be filed within the Category field, flora.

In 2.50, the *Icon* field is multiple flora. The detail of Element and Syntax places the image within the floral Theme field, and the Element description papyrus flower plant places the image within the Category field, flora.

In 2.51, the *Icon* field is multiple flora. The detail of Element and Syntax places the image within the foliate Theme field while the strongest Element component, the petaloid, places the image within the Category field, flora.

In 2.52, the *Icon* field is spiraliform. The detail of Element and Syntax places the image within the curvilinear Theme field while the Element vierpass spiral places the image within the Category field, geometric.

In 2.53, the *Icon* field is script sign. The detail of Element and Syntax places the image within the text Theme field while the Elements identified by their CHIC number place the image within the Category field, script.

In 2.54, there is no appropriate icon to identify the image because the seal belongs to a foreign artistic tradition and so it must simply be listed in the Category field, miscellaneous.

When the User comes to consult the IconAegean Database for comparisons, a search may be instituted on one or more of the five Iconographic fields helped by the prompts of the available vocabulary. To find featured male images comparable to the one in 2.37, go to any Data View layout and use the Find command to call up the field outlines. Enter VIP with familiar in the *Icon* field and enter Lord in the Element field. On the Perform Find command, 51 comparable images will be retrieved. The User may scroll through the selected entries, or they may be viewed as a list in the Comparison layout. To switch to the Comparison layout go to the pulldown layout command which currently reads Data View and click on Comparison. The selected entries will be assembled in a list showing the images. This is particularly helpful for the User wishing to compare iconographic detail. To find featured female images comparable to the one in 2.38, go to any Data View layout and use the Find command to call up the field outlines. Enter VIP granting audience in the *Icon* field. On the Perform Find command, 16 comparable images will be retrieved. The User may scroll through the selected entries, or they may be viewed as a list in the Comparison layout accessed as described above. A print-out of the Comparison layout of these 16 images is provided as Appendix 5.

Now that we have arrived at the point of understanding the IconAegean Vocabulary and its use in the IconAegean Classification of seal images, we will be able to use it consistently throughout this book. The discussion and argument here is presented through the illustrations of the seals. The Plate pages are thus integral to the exposition, but additional examples can always be consulted by searching the IconAegean Database using the IconAegean Vocabulary terms as Key Words. In Chapter 3, as the discussions begin to use the IconAegean Vocabulary, we will refer readers to the appropriate searches on the IconAegean Database so that they can find additional examples and gain familiarity with the vocabulary terms. If readers do not wish to start interrogating the Database at this point, there will be other opportunities. In Chapters 4 to 12, which expound the iconography of each motif, the first *Footnote* lists the apposite IconAegean terms and reminds readers where they can find examples by searching on each term in its appropriate IconAegean Database field. Collecting all the extant examples helps to inform the Database User and the reader which motifs and compositions are most favoured and which are relatively rare in the various periods.

Design Concepts and Compositional Devices (Plates 2.55 to 2.63)

Let us return now to the *Icon* as set out in the *Icon* field and to its constituent parts set out in the Element field and the Syntax field. We have seen that the identification of the *Icon* and the describing of the detail of its Element component are crucial for the sorting and classification into Categories and Themes. In these duties the Syntax component is somewhat muted. However, it is the Syntax component that can help the reader understand the full importance of subject matter detail. In opening this section on design concepts and compositional devices we stress that the viewer of the image must know what the design

construction is in order to read the message of the seal. All art is like this but, in the concentrated world of the seal, attention to the Syntax of the image is vital. For each image, the overall Syntax composition and its constituent structures guide the viewer to recognise the most important features and to attend to those small additional Element details that highlight content. Over the centuries the seal artists developed a formidable array of design concepts and compositional devices to organise their designs in both bold and subtle ways. To recognise this, the IconAegean Vocabulary lists 90 Syntax terms to explain the organisation of the image detail. All are defined in the IconADict Database. The first entry in the Syntax field is the shape of the seal face as set out above in *Fig. 1*. This is the confining perimeter into which the artist must fit the image. Over the long floruit of the seals the seal artists displayed amazing ingenuity and skill to organise the subject matter into the face shapes. We can observe this in the design concepts that they employed and also in the compositional devices that executed these concepts. For the early decorative designs the devices are bound up with geometry in their reliance on radiation division, symmetry and interlocking rapport. For the early animal subjects, heraldic poses regularly organise the compositions. Later, particular aspects of the *Icons* showing human activity are emphasised by newly created devices. We turn now to the detail of the design concepts and compositional devices¹⁵.

Design Concepts (Plates 2.55 to 2.63)

There are eleven design concepts: decorative, writing, talismanic, focus, frieze, stage, mountain view, landscape, townscape, seascape and cultscape.

The **decorative** design concept is most frequently seen in the Early Seal Period. It organises floral and geometric subjects. The term decorative should not be construed as implying a superficial treatment or one treating a subject lacking in meaning. In 2.51 the various floral and foliate elements are intertwined to play into a curvilinear design, and in 2.2 leaves form a design with S spirals. In 2.52 the vierpass also displays interlinking spirals. In 2.55 radiation organises the design into eight main divisions. In 2.56 and 2.57 symmetry guides the composition. Much of the subject matter of the prepalatial and protopalatial seals is concerned with the decorative arrangement of these geometric, floral and foliate forms¹⁶. In these designs the artists show consummate mastery of antithetical balance, spiraliform fluidity, radiation division and all four types of symmetry as discussed below.

The **writing** design concept allows the artist to place script signs within the seal face perimeter. The hieroglyphic script is the most used in the seal images and is found in MM II seals like 2.53, 2.8 to 2.12, 1.17 and 1.38. In hieroglyphic script the signs are pictures, with most showing in a reduced shape some foliate form, animal, person or object from daily life. The pictographic nature of this script should not be forgotten when the signs are identified by a number, the number assigned in the *Corpus Hieroglyphicarum Inscriptionum Cretae* (CHIC)¹⁷. The organisation of the signs is controlled by the rules of writing hieroglyphic text, as yet not fully understood, but there appears to be some interest in creating a pleasing artistic effect with careful placement of additional items. Linear A is found on a few seals of MM III-LM I date and it, too, has its own rules for depiction, the most interesting being the spiral composition in 2.22. Linear B is virtually absent¹⁸.

15 All design concepts and compositional devices are defined in the IconADict Database. Search in the Key Word field on decorative, writing, talismanic, focus, frieze, stage, mountain view, landscape, townscape, seascape, cultscape, radiation, translatory symmetry, reflectional symmetry, dilatory symmetry, rotational symmetry, antithetical group, mirror reverse, groundline, perimeter groundline, parading, glen, curve fit, centre, left, right, above, below, far left, far right, above centre, above left, above right, below centre, below left, below right, climactic point, diagonal play, heraldic poses, set, sequence, parallel, substitution and duality. These terms are also explained in IAS in the Syntax section.

16 See Chapter 5 below.

17 The CHIC Corpus was published in 1996 with each sign illustrated and given a number.

18 Other scripts, also undeciphered, are known through a few examples. The Phaistos Disk shows a pictographic

The **talismanic** design concept organises the images on a large group of LM I hard stone seals¹⁹. They are characterised by their distinctive cutting style which features much work by the drill and little polishing away of the cut marks. Some of these characteristics continue into the later Cut Style. A detailed analysis of the talismanic seals has been undertaken by Artemis Onassoglou, and her discussion of the motifs is cited in the Chapters below where parallels with the IconAegean terms used in this volume are explained²⁰. The subject matter in talismanic images is similar to the Elements in other seals depicting floral and foliate motifs, animals and insects, sea creatures and things made by human hand like vessels, wickerwork and ships. However, fantastic creations and human figures are rare. Many examples have the motif as sole subject, as with the ship in 2.18 and the double axe in 2.41, and with these, the subject is placed centrally in the design. Other examples add in additional subjects, as with the vase and branches in 1.42, or the vase and double horns in 1.84. So, the description talismanic does not actually signify unusual subject matter or a particular organisational concept. Rather, the nomenclature talismanic refers to the drilling/cutting style that allows special treatment of the motifs. They are linearised, some to the extent that they look abstract. As quite a large group, the talismanics are calling attention to the sub-set of main-stream subject matter that, for some reason, becomes important at this particular time.

With the **focus** design concept, the main subject may stand on a groundline, but all background detail is removed. The effect is to concentrate attention on the main subject and thus declare its importance. It is a concept regularly used in coinage, even to this day, where it is particularly apposite to use the monarch's head on the obverse. In Aegean seals it is one of the most used design concepts from the earliest times to the end and it always serves to bring to the viewer's attention the importance of this particular subject which is granted the sole subject placement in the design. The three gold cushions from the Shaft Graves discussed earlier use the focus concept to heighten the tension. In 2.58 the wounded lion collapses on rocky ground but is otherwise shown without any surrounding detail. The result is a concentration on the lion subject and its agonised twist towards the imbedded arrow. In the war duelling and hunt duelling presentations of 2.32 and 2.34 the focus concept sets a blank background. Thus, all attention is riveted on the violent confrontation of the protagonists, climaxing in the fatal sword thrust. Similarly, the human figure in 2.37, the griffin in 2.44, the fantastic composite in 2.45, the hound in 2.46 and the agrimi in 2.25 are positioned in this featured way and thus enhanced in importance. The effect of the focus still holds even when a small addition is made to the main subject, as with the branches and birdwoman in 2.43 or when a grouping of subjects stresses their composite importance as with the man, his hound and flask in 2.39 and the row of eight shields and cloak knots in 2.42. However, to return to the image in 2.37, it is one of a number in Minoan High Art which appear to take the focus design concept and its depiction of the sole subject to new levels. Here the human figure and his accompanying griffin stand quite still. It is the same with the male figure and lion in 1.43. These figures are not involved in any action and seem to exist beyond time or place, thus enhancing the stature and importance of these figures. The other use of the focus concept concerns *Icons* where the activity of human figures or animals is already organised in a codified way, as with the antithetical group discussed below.

The **frieze** design concept organises subjects between confines at the top and bottom but not at the sides, thus allowing repetition of the design. The frieze is a characteristic composition of the cylinder seal as seen in the Mesopotamian/Anatolian example, 2.54. This eastern medium facilitates the unending nature of the design as it is rolled out by inter-linking the subjects in the design and allowing different combinations to be presented. In the Aegean, the relatively few cylinder seals sometimes make use of the repetitive possibilities of this medium, but often artists prefer to set an *Icon* on the curved surface of the

script arranged in a spiral pattern, CM Pls. 72 and 73. For the "Archanes Script" see AS, 70-72.

19 Numbering about 900 seals. Some talismanic seals might have been made before the beginning of LM I and so are stylistically dated MM III-LM I. A few are of pseudo-jasper, limestone or marble and are thus of somewhat softer stone.

20 CMS B2. The technical aspects are explained, 171-189, and there are comments on the Cut Style, 190-192. See also AS, 133-137, for discussion of the talismanic group and AS, 201-203 for the Cut Style.

cylinder as if it were a stamp seal face. An animal seizing is seen in 2.29, a Griffin Lord is seen in 12.155 and a chariot scene is shown in 12.164. Sometimes the image is turned at right angles to the top/bottom confining line²¹, suggesting that the artists did not feel restricted by any of the artistic rules pertaining to this eastern cylinder seal medium.

The **stage** and **mountain view** design concepts refer to how the artist organises complex scenes²². These design concepts belong to the periods after the change seen in the Phaistos Sealings when the *Icon* begins to encompass the whole scene. Accordingly, the images created in these design concepts belong to compositions of the Experimentation and Minoan High Art Periods or later when the *Icon* has become the total image. The eye of the artist creates the complex image and invites the viewer to take the same point of view. Thus, the viewer stands looking in at these scenes as one would at a concert presentation for the stage concept or from a high vantage point for the mountain view concept. There is nothing between the viewer and the image. The viewer is not required to understand certain artistic rules before approaching the image and so the effect is immediate. It is this very human viewpoint that makes Aegean art so accessible. With the stage concept, the people and surrounding detail are positioned on a groundline as in 2.59. All the activity seems to take place within a surface plane with no real suggestion of depth, as with acting on a stage. In 2.63 the rocks, woman, grand pillar and shrine are all positioned on the groundline while the Epiphany Lord hovers above within the same plane. Other examples are 2.38 with the Great Lady granting audience and 2.72 with the Staff Lady giving the power gesture. The stage concept is the most popular way of organising complex images. With the mountain view²³ design concept the subject matter is organised as if seen by someone looking down on a scene which is set out as a panorama before their eyes. There is a real attempt to convey depth in the image. In 2.60, the ship scene is depicted with the ship and its crew at the quay in the foreground together with one of the main figures, the people on the quay are positioned at different levels in the middle ground, and then there are the buildings in the background. Similar effects are seen in 3.55 to 3.57. The mountain view is an experimental concept, but its influence serves to modify the stage usage and to introduce the use of perspective discussed in the next Chapter.

The **landscape**, **townscape**, **seascape** and **cultscape** design concepts are created by the artists in order to manage the detail of complex scenes. The stage and mountain view concepts consolidate their role in image composition in Minoan High Art by providing the best method for artists to express the interest in human and animal activities. For the seal artists, the amount of detail required for the depiction of these complex scenes poses new problems of providing clarity within the small compass of the seal face. They develop four new concepts which work to refine the stage and mountain view. I have named them landscape, townscape, seascape and cultscape. For each of these there is a cluster of indicator Elements which the artist places strategically within the overall design, and these act like a “shorthand” to define the setting for the main action. Using these indicator Elements the artist is able to restrict the number of items in the complex scenes and thus achieve the clarity needed to help the viewer understand the full import of the image. With the landscape, one or more of rocks, water, plants and trees are positioned below, above, left or right to suggest the outdoors where the *Icon* field activity takes place. In 2.61 the lion leaps out from a rocky outcrop through tall plants while in 2.36 the tree and rocky ground confine the netted bull and fallen hunter. With the townscape, one or more buildings or parts of buildings are positioned right, left or above to suggest the urban setting for the *Icon* field activity. These details allow the viewer of the seal immediately to visualise the scene which, of course, they are likely to have seen many times, as with the farewell/arrival at the quayside in 2.60. With the seascape, the artist takes the viewer under the surface of the sea to look at the aquatic life cavorting there. The rocky wateredge has a

21 As in CMS II.3 65 and CMS VII 174.

22 See the analysis of complex scenes in Aegean glyptic in Crowley CMS B8, 131-147.

23 Sometimes called the cavalier perspective but coining a new term, mountain view, avoids the anachronism and pays respect to the early origins of this concept created by a people familiar with mountain views.

distinct form and surrounds the fish and octopus in 2.62 and the dolphins diving down in 2.20 and 2.48. In other images seaweed is added to define the under-water scene, as in 7.19, 7.20 and 7.22. With the cultscape, the activity of human figures occurs within a setting that may have the Elements of rocks and greenery that define the landscape or buildings that define the townscape. However, significantly, it has indicator Elements which declare the activity of these human figures as special, as cultic or symbolic of the supernatural world. These indicators are the *Icons*, VIP appearing on high, hovering symbol, celestial sign, flying messenger and tree growing from rocky ground, as well as the presence of one or more of the Elements, shrine, altar, boulder, beehive or flower field. In 2.63 a woman greets a VIP appearing on high in front of an ashlar tree shrine, and in 2.72 a man greets a VIP appearing on high in front of a tiered shrine. In 3.55 women gesture in a flower field, and the beehive with bees appears in 5.121 and 5.127.

Compositional Devices (Plates 2.55 to 2.57 and 2.64 to 2.66)

There are ten compositional devices: radiation, symmetry, antithetical group, mirror reverse, groundline, perimeter groundline, placement, climactic point, diagonal play and heraldic poses.

We begin with the early images inspired by **geometric principles** which organise detail in the decorative concept. Various terms from other art traditions have been used over the years in discussions on Aegean art, and the ones that are purely descriptive like dreipass and vierpass have been retained. For others the IconAegean Vocabulary chooses rather to use geometric terms for such descriptions, thus recognising the serious understanding of geometry displayed by the seal artists. This nomenclature was begun by Friedrich Matz in his pioneering work on early Cretan seals where he set out the principles of symmetry, radiation, interlocking and unending rapport²⁴. The **radiation** principle divides the circle by equally spaced radii. In 2.55 the 16 divisions result in an eight-pointed star with “rays” marking the interstices. In other examples the favourite divisions of 4, 6 or 8 result in the geometric/floral symbiosis of flowers with four, six or eight petals. The adventurous use of the four forms of **symmetry** produces some of the most pleasing decorative patterns. In 2.56 the flowers are arranged in **translatory** symmetry where motifs are repeated in parallel, but the placement also results in an exercise in **reflectional** symmetry where the motifs reflect each other across a median line (in this case twice, about a central vertical line and about a central horizontal line). In 2.57 the vierpass spiral spins the composition anti-clockwise in **rotational symmetry** as the S spirals interlock. In 1.25 the dreipass likewise spins anti-clockwise while in 2.52 the vierpass spiral moves clockwise. The use of rotational symmetry is a particular feature of Minoan decorative composition, and it is widely used early, imparting movement to the designs. For **dilatory** symmetry, where a motif is repeated in a larger or smaller version, examples are rare in seal design, perhaps shown only by the palmettes in 5.90. Interlocking designs are featured in spiraliform compositions and in the meander and guilloche motifs which, by their very nature, are interlocking designs. In 2.57 four S spirals interlock to form a vierpass spiral, as also seen in 2.52. In 1.53 four interlocking C spirals create a tightly balanced design while a similar balanced effect is achieved by the arrangement of the coil spirals in 1.54. The meander may show rounded bends as in 4.42 to 4.45 or may use angular interlocking²⁵. The guilloche uses simple rope-like interlocking, as in 2.2, right through to complicated folding²⁶. Unending rapport describes designs where the pattern is not confined by borders, as in the quatrefoil pattern in 1.69, the zigzag pattern in 4.46 and the palmette pattern in 5.90.

The **antithetical group** and the **mirror reverse** compositions reveal that an interest in symmetry is not restricted to decorative patterns. Reflective symmetry is also on display in these two formal compositions involving human figures and animals which fill out detail in focus concepts. The antithetical group composition is the more used of the two. The Mistress of Animals as in 2.64, 2.72 and 1.24 and the

24 See Matz 1928, *Die Frühkretischen Siegel. Eine Untersuchung über das Werden des minoischen Stiles*.

25 As in CMS II.1 60, CMS IV 4 and CMS IV 5.

26 As in CMS II.5 162 and CMS II.8 22.

Master of Animals as in 2.24 and 1.97 place the human figure as the central motif, with attendant animals each side providing the reflective symmetry and thus the balance in the composition. It should be noted that the attendants in the Mistress and Master images are usually the same animal in the same pose each side, but not necessarily so. In 2.24 the pose of the lions is different, and in 12.192 the animals attending the Master are a griffin and a lion. Such variations are always at the hand of the seal artist who is ever looking for details to make the seal image unique. The other much-used antithetical group is the animals at the tree of life composition and its Aegean make-over with the grand pillar and/or curved altar substituting for the tree as the central motif. In 2.65 and 1.98 griffins attend a grand pillar, and in 1.26 the attendants are lions. In contrast to the antithetical group with its central figure, the mirror reverse has a central space, and the sides are in reflective symmetry about this. It is not as widely used as the antithetical group but can be seen in the animals and fantastic creatures posed in 2.23, 1.48 and 1.91 and in the four-way depiction of the milking scene in 1.87. These two compositional devices, along with their original subject matter content, are ultimately sourced in the eastern traditions, the Mesopotamian for the antithetical group and the Egyptian for the mirror reverse²⁷. They harness the inherent reflective symmetry to provide extra emphasis on the subject matter, a point to be kept in mind when reading the import of the image.

A simple **groundline** is regularly used across all periods to anchor animals and humans to the base of the design. The **perimeter groundline**, known from the early seals, has profound design effects. In 2.66 an animal file walks anticlockwise around the perimeter of the circular design, described as parading. Within this outer ring a file of spiders crawls clockwise around an inner (understood) perimeter. In 1.14 three humans sit in a circle within a leafy perimeter. This use of the confining edge of the seal face as a groundline recurs throughout all periods, finding its best expression in the electric confrontation of hunter and boar in 2.35. One other design function of the perimeter concerns its use in the glen motif. Here, the rocky ground, which provides the groundline for humans and animals to stand upon, is continued above and around the upper perimeter, as in the war duelling scene in 2.33 and the granting audience scene in 2.38. It is not possible to continue the looping rocks rising up as they do from the below perimeter and so the artist simply “hangs” them down from the above perimeter. What we are intended to read from this compositional device is that there is a background of rocks, a rocky hillside, against which the human figures are seen as they would be in real life. However, if the artist had continued the rocks throughout the background they would have “cluttered” the image and made it difficult for the viewer to read all the detail – especially that of the important human figure subjects. Accordingly, in the interests of clarity, the artist simply removes the background around the protagonists to leave them featured but reminds the viewer of the rocky ground all around by using the compositional device of the glen motif to “hang” looping rocks from the perimeter groundline. Misunderstanding the glen motif has often led to mistaken interpretations when seal images are being read. The sustained use of the glen motif signifies its usefulness for design clarity and the need to register the earth forms of mountainous Crete and Greece. It is known in an incipient form in the Early Seal Period as in 4.1, 4.7 and 4.8 and continues into the later designs as in 2.47 and 4.114. The perimeter is also a controlling aspect in the compositional device of the curve fit. In this the artist shapes the motif to fit within the curve of the perimeter. In the Early Seals the toothed pole tool is normally shown as straight as in 9.1, but in some examples it is curved to fit the perimeter as in 9.2. In many cases, using the curve fit is simply making a virtue of necessity as when the great horns of the agrimi sweep round the upper perimeter as in 1.3, 1.79 and 2.26, and the arc of the leaper’s somersault reaches up to the perimeter as in 1.86. The ceremony of pulling the tree does necessitate the tree bending over the tree puller, but the artist regularly exaggerates this movement to follow the line of the upper perimeter as in 5.121 to 5.123, 5.126 and 5.127.

The **placement** of each Element within the perimeter boundary is a careful choice of the artist to preserve clarity and enhance meaning. Overlapping of Elements is eschewed. For the much-used

²⁷ See AE, 19-27.

focus composition there is only the centre position as in 2.16 and 2.25. In the simpler compositions comprising several Elements, each may be placed in the centre, left, right, above or below positions as in 2.7 and 2.39. For the complex compositions of LM I, mostly seen on the oval ring bezels, more detail in the positioning is needed as in 2.33 and 2.60. Thus, the original five positions are supplemented by the far left, far right, above centre, above left, above right, below centre, below left and below right positions. In creating the cultscapes, the nuanced placement of Elements allows for the clear presentation of maximum information. In 2.72, 3.45 and 3.56 the far left and/or far right curves of the bezel are used to draw attention to important Elements like a shrine, panoply and beehive. In 3.98 the importance of the grand pillar is stressed by placing it in the far right. It then comes to stand at the back of the seated female, a placement which is also an important identifier of VIP figures. In 2.63, 3.55, 3.56 and 3.98 the above centre, above left and above right placements declare the importance of the epiphany figures and the hovering symbols.

The next two compositional devices, **climactic point** and **diagonal play** are found in Minoan High Art, usually in the depiction of war and hunt scenes, and often together, as discussed above. Choosing to portray a war duel or a hunt duel at the very moment of the delivery of the fatal thrust is pure *Icon* composition. The artist emphasises the extreme violence of the battle by exploiting the diagonals inherent in the body postures. When the seal perimeter is a rectangle then the diagonals of that geometric form are also harnessed. Thus, in 2.32 and 2.34 we see the purest form of the climactic point and diagonal play. The climactic point is also on display in the animal attack Theme. Here the artist chooses to portray the precise moment when the predator takes the prey either in the crunching *Icon* as in 2.28 and 1.92 or the seizing *Icon* as in 2.29 and 1.80.

Many of the compositional devices discussed above employ **heraldic poses** to portray the animals. In these formal compositions animals are depicted in codified poses based on observations made from nature. These poses have already been given names in the complicated art of European heraldry. Although I have generally resisted anachronisms in choosing IconAegean Vocabulary, I have accepted the heraldic poses because they are extremely precise and do not bring back to the Bronze Age any meaning from their later time slot. Most of the heraldic terms for animal poses are employed here, and a new one, displayed, is coined to describe the spread wing position. Accordingly, in formal presentations in the Syntax field, animal poses are described as statant, couchant, sejant, rampant, inverted, suspended, gardant, regardant, erect, lowered, addorsed and in saltire, and for wings as close, elevated and displayed. Examples are the griffin couchant regardant displayed in 2.44, the lions statant regardant addorsed in 1.26, the lions rampant in 1.24, the hounds rampant regardant addorsed in 2.64 and the griffins sejant elevated in 2.65.

Layering Meaning through *Icons* (Plates 2.67 to 2.72)

Now it has always been thought that seal designs were limited as art works because their small size restricted the subject matter that could be fitted into each seal face, and so there could be no large-scale compositions. Technically this is true, notwithstanding the complex scenes in the late signet rings – but have we been missing something? If readers gather all the seal images together for each period they will see groups of images combining to give an extended view of certain subjects. Take the motif of the agrimi we discussed earlier. The animal is shown singly, in groups, standing, reclining, in a flying gallop, mating, suckling young, attacked by hounds, wounded by an arrow, contorted in death, carried as catch by a hunter, bound as a sacrifice, or shown only as a head. The life cycle of an agrimi is presented across the totality of this group. One image at any point in this cycle recalls all the other images and so a full depiction of the agrimi is recorded. Consider the human subjects in the Early Seal Period. These stylised human figures show similar referencing across many images. There are men shown singly, in pairs, in a group, with an animal, at work, with a vessel, with a tool and carrying loads. Add to these the images where a man holds a weapon, and you have a succinct summary of the ordinary man's duties, both in peace and in war, at the time of building the first palaces. Again, one image can call to mind the other

activities of men in everyday life. Thus, to consider each image as belonging to a wider grouping allows the viewer to see the seals as presenting a composite picture of experienced life that resonates with the artist and the seal owner alike. This interconnectedness of *Icons* provides for a carefully crafted layering of meaning.

The **sets** and **sequences** of Minoan High Art take up the interconnectedness of *Icons* that has been with us since the Early Seal Period to further craft the layering of meaning. This occurs when a Theme is worked out through specific *Icons*. Some sets and sequences focus on the male pursuits of bull leaping, war and the hunt. The bull sports Theme requires six *Icons* to portray fully the episodes of danger faced by the bull leapers, and these constitute the bull sports set: leaper preparing, leaper somersaulting, leaper landing, leaper falling, leaper fallen and leaper bulldogging. In 9.94 the leaper stands before the charging bull, in 2.67 and 1.86 leapers somersault over the bull's back, in 2.68 the leaper is landing, in 9.166 and 9.167 the leaper is falling, in 2.69 the leaper has fallen and in 9.95 the leaper is bulldogging. The *Icons*, in sum, explore the points of highest danger that the leaper faces and thus, as a set, give a full account of the lethal intensity of bull sports activity. There is, moreover, within five *Icons* of the set, a time sequence, and this sequence either leads to success for the leaper, or failure. The successful endeavour begins with the leaper preparing, continues with the somersaulting and ends with the safe landing. Disaster is catalogued with the other sequence, leaper preparing followed by the somersaulting where the leaper misjudges his vault and slips down into serious injury as the leaper falling or to death under the hooves of the bull as the leaper fallen. When the viewer looks at one of these bull sports images then the others come to mind, swirling around to give a full account of the bravery of the leaper and the power of the bull. To portray the Themes of the war and the hunt, the war set/sequence comprises four *Icons* – warrior armed, warrior aiming, war duelling and warrior fallen – while the hunt set/sequence comprises six *Icons* – hunter aiming, hunt duelling, hunt wrestling, carrying the catch, dealing with the catch and hunter fallen.

With its focus on animal life, the animal attack Theme requires a set/sequence comprising seven *Icons* to give it full display: animal stalking, animal holding at bay, animal chasing, animal crunching, animal seizing, animal carrying the catch and animal feeding on the catch. The sequence begins with the *Icons* of animal stalking as with the cat and the bird in 6.88, the animal holding at bay as with the hound and agrimi in 1.60, and the animal chasing as with the hound and stag in 6.24. The actual attack is rendered by the *Icons* of the animal seizing and the animal crunching. In the animal seizing, the predator comes from under the prey to bite deep into its belly, as with the hound and the agrimi in 1.76 and the cat and bird in 1.80/2.13. In the animal crunching, the predator makes its onslaught from above, biting down hard into the backbone of its prey, as with the lion and the bull in 1.92 and the lion and stag in 2.28. The aftermath of the attack is recorded by the *Icon* animal carrying the catch, where the predator takes its meal away, as with the lion and the agrimi in 2.30, and by the *Icon* animal feeding on the catch, where the predator consumes its meal, as with the lion gorging on the quadruped in 10.33.

Parallels in *Icon* depiction extend the layering of meaning by linking various sets. Consider the war set, the hunt set and the bull sports set. In each of these there is an *Icon* showing the male protagonist in dire straits. In 2.70 the war duelling clearly identifies two warriors, a victor and a vanquished. However, there is a third figure, slumped and twisted and now out of combat as the warrior fallen. The warrior fallen is also seen in 2.31 and 2.33. In the hunt set the hunter fallen is seen in 2.36, his body twisted and bent back as the bull still tries to gore and trample him while twisted around by the ensnaring net. In the bull sports set the leaper fallen is seen lying stretched below the bull in 2.69. When the viewer observes one of these *Icons* they immediately recall the others because of the parallel depictions of the human male body slumped/twisted/stretched in agony. By creating these parallel *Icons* of human distress, the artist warns in the most graphic way of the life-threatening nature of war, the hunt and the bull sports.

Substitution of a figure or symbol is one of the most significant ways of extending meaning. This occurs when one meaningful figure or symbol is placed in the position usually occupied by another meaningful figure or symbol. In 2.71 we see the VIP granting audience *Icon* where a power figure is seated and is approached by other figures of lesser standing. The power figure one expects to see is a large female, the Great Seated Lady, but here it is a monkey who sits on a special seat with footstool and gives

a greeting gesture to an approaching figure. The substitution raises questions of identity and association that beg interpretation. What does it mean that the Great Seated Lady and monkey can occupy the same exalted pose? Substitution can involve symbols as well. The Mesopotamian motif animals at the tree of life, which is rendered in the antithetical group composition discussed above, is known in the Aegean. In these antithetical group images the central symbol of the tree of life can be replaced by an Aegean grand pillar as in 2.65 and 1.26 or by an Aegean curved altar as in 10.14 or by both, with the grand pillar standing on a curved altar as in 1.98. The importance of the grand pillar/curved altar in the Aegean is emphasised by its subsuming the position of one of the most powerful symbols in the great Mesopotamian tradition.

Duality of meaning is a particularly potent way to layer meaning within the image. This occurs when a figure/symbol has two meanings, with both applicable in the particular image on view. The use of duality begins early with the overlay of geometric and floral motifs. In 2.55 it is a geometric radiation design but it is also a flower with eight pointed petals. In 2.51 the large and small triple buds combine to give the effect of a larger lily flower with pistil and stamens while the petaloid below functions as a leaf. In 2.57 geometric flora duality has spirals as vine tendrils and petaloids as leaves. In Minoan High Art duality can apply to human figures. In 2.72 the *Icon* VIP appearing on high has the human male gesturing to the Epiphany Lady above him as she descends to the mountain top²⁸. However, the Epiphany Lady is also flanked by lions each side of the mountain in an antithetical group that declares her the Mistress of Animals similar to the image in 1.24. This female VIP exudes the power of both identities. In 12.192 the Master of Animals has as attendants a griffin and a lion. Accordingly, he is both a Griffin Master and a Lion Master telescoped into one powerful being. In another Master of Animals image, 12.193, the Hound Master is the Mighty Lord with duality calling on the power of both personas.

In an attempt to register this overlap of meaning some writers have described it as ambiguity²⁹. However, the word ambiguity in English has two meanings: something that is unclear because it can be understood in one of two (or more) ways, or because it is uncertain, indefinite or confusing. Even when writers try to stay closely with philosophical interpretations of ambiguity, it is not always clear why they are advocating multiple meanings for the image. It seems better to avoid all these problems with the term, ambiguity, and coin one that more carefully describes how the Minoan seal artist actually creates the overlap of meaning. There is no suggestion of uncertainty, indefiniteness or confusion. The *Icons* are clearly presented through their Element and Syntax details when they are used in the seal images. There is no suggestion that the viewer has to choose between meanings when the details coalesce in the image. Indeed, all meanings are true, and so there is a doubling (or tripling) of the efficacy of the message in the image. Accordingly, this book does not use the term, ambiguity, but has coined a new term, duality, to encapsulate the certainty and power of this particular artistic method of layering meaning used by Minoan artists.

28 The sealing image can be assembled from six extant pieces but the vital piece showing where her feet are in relation to the mountain top is missing.

29 Lyvia Morgan opened discussion of the problem in her essay, "Ambiguity and Interpretation", Morgan CMS B3, 145-161, with particular focus on the seal images. Later writers appear to use the term rather freely.

Plates 2.1 to 2.72

Miniature Art: the Size and Shape of the Seal Face

figural



2.1 – ivory
(II.1 294/EM III-MM IA) 2.2 x 2 cm

stamp cylinder



2.2 – ivory
(II.1 497 a and b/EM III-MM IA)
2.26 x 2.13 cm and 1.87 x 1.85 cm

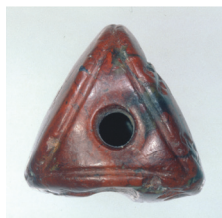
petschaft



2.3 – chalcedony
(II.2 249/MM II) 1.2 x 1.2 cm



three sided prism



2.4 – steatite
(III 505/LM I-LM II)
1.33 x 1.29 cm



2.5 – steatite
(III 168a/MM II) 1.42 x 0.85 cm



2.6 – steatite
(III 168b/MM II) 1.42 x 0.94 cm



2.7 – steatite
(III 168c/MM II) 1.42 x 0.94 cm

four sided prism



2.9 – green jasper
(II.2 256a/MM II) 1.8 x 0.7 cm



2.10 – green jasper
(II.2 256b/MM II) 1.8 x 0.7 cm



2.8 – gold
(III 234/MM II) 1.5 x 0.6 cm



2.11 – green jasper
(II.2 256c/MM II) 1.8 x 0.7 cm



2.12 – green jasper
(II.2 256d/MM II) 1.8 x 0.7 cm

Miniature Art: the Size and Shape of the Seal Face

lentoid



2.13 – chlorite
(VI 367/LM I-LM II) 1.8 x 1.8 cm



2.14 – carnelian
(III 377/LM I) 1.68 x 1.66 cm



2.15 – dark green jasper
(VI 459/LM I) 1.7 x 1.7 cm

amygdaloid



2.16 – haematite
(VII 88/LM I) 2.9 x 1.5 cm



2.17 – carnelian
(II.3 61/LM I-LM II?) 2 x 1.15 cm



2.18 – green jasper
(II.3 208/LM I) 2.3 x 1.65 cm

cushion



2.19 – green stone
(II.3 238/MM II-MM III) 1.6 x 1.3 cm



2.20 – steatite/gold
(VI 182/MM III-LM I) 1.75 x 1.53 cm



2.21 – chalcedony
(II.3 52/LB II-LB IIIA1) 2 x 1.45 cm

signet



2.22 – gold
(II.3 38/MM III-LM I) 0.95 x 0.85 cm



2.23 – gold
(I 189/LB II-LB IIIA1) 2.2 x 1.5 cm



2.24 – red jasper
(I 89/LB II) 2.8 x 1.8 cm

Searching for the Essence: the *Icon*

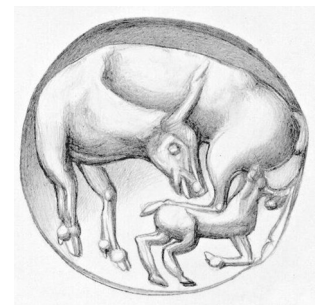
agrimi



2.25 – agrimi resting
(II.8 375/MM III-LM I)



2.26 – agrimia mating
(VII 68/MM III-LM I)

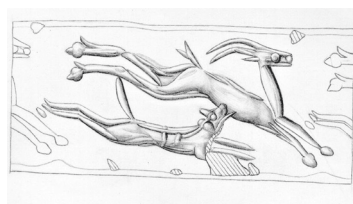


2.27 – agrimi suckling
(VS 1A 156/LM I)

animal attack



2.28 – lion crunching
(XI 42/LH I-LH II)



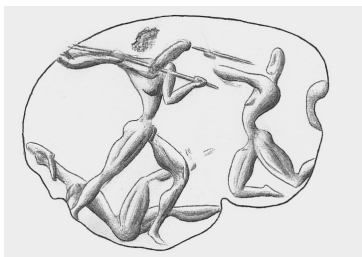
2.29 – hound seizing
(VS 1B 190/LM I)



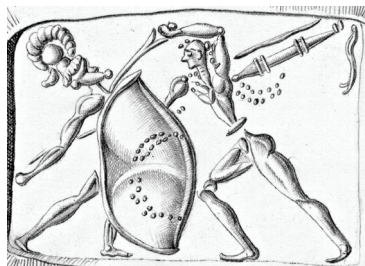
2.30 – lion carrying the catch
(VII 125/LB I-LB II)

Searching for the Essence: the *Icon*

war



2.31 – war duelling, warrior fallen
(II.7 20/LM I)

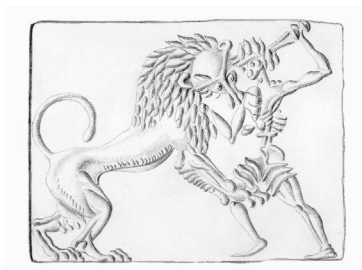


2.32 – war duelling
(I 11/LH I)



2.33 – war duelling, warrior fallen
(I 16/LH I)

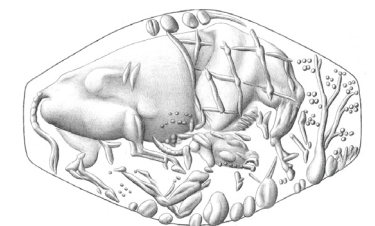
hunt



2.34 – hunt duelling
(I 9/LH I)



2.35 – hunt duelling
(I 294/LB II)



2.36 – hunter fallen
(I 274/LB I-LB II)

The IconAegean Vocabulary and the IconAegean Classification



2.37 – VIP with familiar: Griffin Lord:
circle, focus
(I 223/LB I-LB II)



2.38 – VIP granting audience: Great Lady:
oval horizontal, stage
(II.8 268/LM I)



2.39 – man carrying loads: porter:
oval horizontal, focus
(VI 44c/MM II)



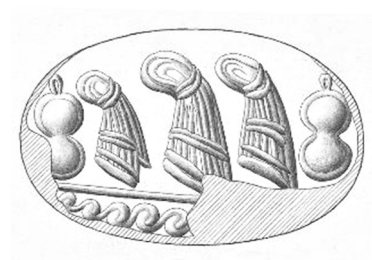
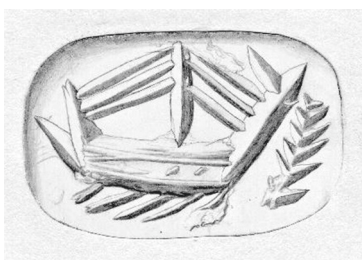
2.40 – sailing ship: ship: oval horizontal,
focus
(II.2 276b/MM II)



2.41 – special object: double axe:
circle, talismanic
(VII 54/MM II-MM III)



2.42 – special object: cloak knot, eight
shield: oval horizontal, focus
(II.8 127/LM I)



The IconAegean Vocabulary and the IconAegean Classification



2.43 – hybrid woman: birdwoman: circle, focus
(III 364/LM I)



2.44 – animal resting: griffin: rectangle horizontal, focus
(I 293/LB II)



2.45 – animal parts plus: boar head: circle, focus
(II.7 157/LM I)



2.46 – animal scratching: hound: circle, focus
(VI 396/LM I)



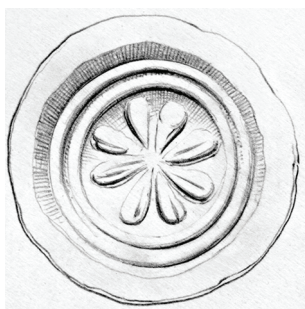
2.47 – animal tethered: bull: oval horizontal, mountain view
(V 198/LM II-LM IIIA1)



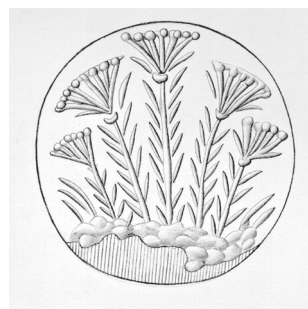
2.48 – dolphin leaping: dolphin: fragment
(II.8 161/LM I)



The IconAegean Vocabulary and the IconAegean Classification



2.49 – single flora: rosette flower: circle, focus
(II.1 302b/EM III/MM IA)



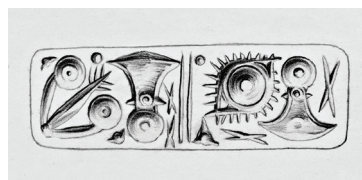
2.50 – multiple flora: papyrus flower plant: circle, focus
(VS 1A 46/MM III-LM I)



2.51 – multiple flora: petaloid, triple bud: circle, decorative
(III 86/MM II)



2.52 – spiraliform: vierpass spiral: rectangle horizontal, decorative
(II.8 19/EM III-MM IA)



2.53 – script sign, CHIC: rectangle horizontal, writing
(VI 100c/MM II)



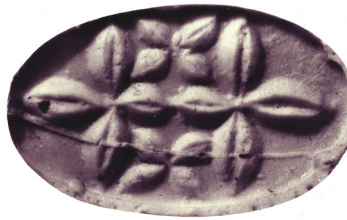
2.54 – category: miscellaneous
(II.2 29/-)

Design Concepts and Compositional Devices

Design Concepts



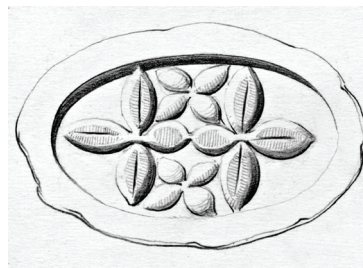
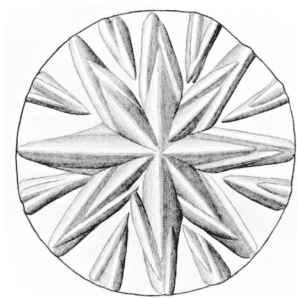
2.55 – decorative radiation, division 8
(III 91/MM II)



2.56 – decorative translatory symmetry,
reflectional symmetry
(II.1 135/EM III-MM IA)



2.57 – decorative rotational symmetry
(IV 140/MM II)



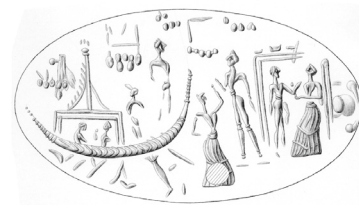
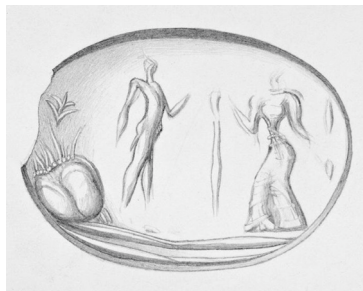
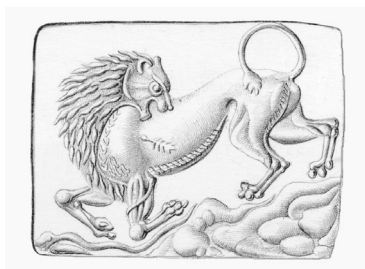
2.58 – focus
(I 10/LH I)



2.59 – stage
(VS 1A 180/LM I)



2.60 – mountain view, townscape
(I 180/LB II)

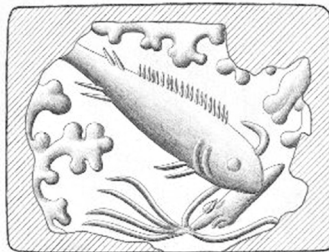


Design Concepts and Compositional Devices

Design Concepts



2.61 – mountain view?, landscape
(VS 1B 331/MM II-MM III?)



2.62 – stage, seascape
(II.8 157/MM III-LM I)



2.63 – stage, cultscape
(VI 281/LM I)

Compositional Devices



2.64 – antithetical group, heraldic poses
(II.8 254/LM IIIA1)



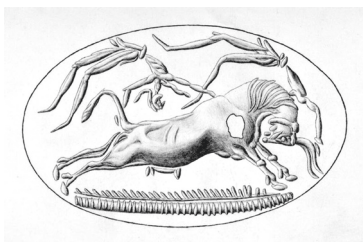
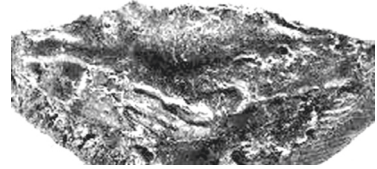
2.65 – antithetical group, heraldic poses
(I 218/LB II-LB IIIA1)



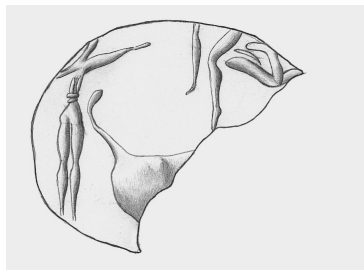
2.66 – perimeter groundline
(II.1 248a/EM III-MM IA)

Layering Meaning through *Icons*

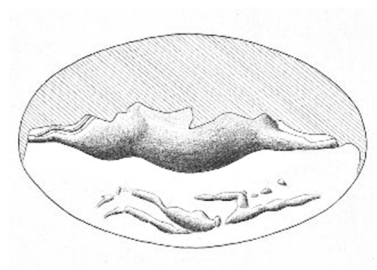
Sets and Sequences



2.67 – bull sports set, sequence
(VS 1B 135/LB H IIIA1?)

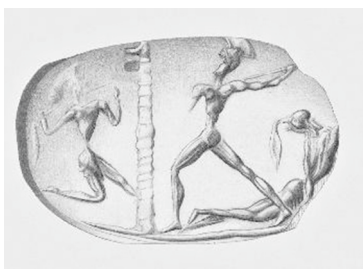


2.68 – bull sports set, sequence
(II.7 35/LM I)



2.69 – bull sports set, sequence
(II.8 227/LM I)

Parallels, Substitution, Duality



2.70 – parallel
(II.6 17/LM I)



2.71 – substitution
(II.8 262/LM I-LM II?)



2.72 – duality
(II.8 256/LM I)

Chapter 3 Innovation in Minoan Artistic Design

The Minoans created an art that was significantly different from the grand Mesopotamian and Egyptian traditions to the east and their derivatives. Just how different is only now being revealed as interest in the seal images increases.

Beautiful Geometry and Natural Shapes (Plates 3.1 to 3.18)

We turn first to study the designs of the Early Seal Period to chart their innovation in coalescing geometry and nature. We have already glimpsed the knowledge of geometric principles revealed in designs of the early seals as we noted the circle with its radiation divisions in 2.55 and the spiraliform designs of 1.53, 1.54, 2.51, 2.51 and 2.57. Yet the acute observation of geometric shapes begins with the shape of the seal itself. Leaving aside the early figural seals, the seal shape itself takes a three-dimensional geometric form in the cylinders and prisms, the discoids, lentoids and amygdaloids. In the two dimensions of the seal face, the shape is again geometric – circle, oval and rectangle – and it is the first designation listed in the Syntax field. For the components of the seal design, the inspiration of geometric shapes is profound. It includes the spiral, ellipse, interlocking patterns and angular designs. Elements based on the spiral are the coil, J spiral, C spiral, S spiral, whirl, zweipass, dreipass, vierpass and running spiral band. The precise halving of the ellipse gives us the petaloid, and it works with the various looping and fill ornaments, the twoloop, threeloop, threecorner and fourcorner. Interlocking patterns and border designs using a geometric base are the guilloche, meander, rope band and dentate band. Then there are the angular designs of the cross, chevron, zigzag and swastika, and the geometric forms of the lozenge, ring, ellipse, pentagram and hexagram¹. Knowledge of geometry and the ability to play with the geometric forms have produced beautiful radiating and spiraliform designs that have been admired since Aegean art first came to the attention of archaeologists and art lovers. Yet, there is another level to the Minoan understanding of geometry, and that is their ability to see the deep underlying structure in natural forms and to incorporate it into their depiction of flora and fauna.

The seminal floral/foliate shapes are the rosette, quatrefoil, papyrus, lily, palm, palmette, leaf and petaloid², all terms being used as art designations³. The daisy-like flower seen in plan becomes the rosette, its usual six or eight petals reflecting the many flowers that share this number of petals. Seen in 3.1, this eight-petalled rosette has its circular shape accentuated by the ring border with double leaf band surround and by its petals forming the radiation division 8 design created when the circle is dissected along 8 radii spaced at 45° angles. Dots in the interstices indicate the position of dissecting radii. For the six-petalled rosette the design is created when the circle is dissected along 6 radii spaced at 60° angles.

1 Search the IconAegean Database in the Element field on coil spiral, J spiral, C spiral, S spiral, whirl spiral, zweipass spiral, dreipass spiral, vierpass spiral, running spiral band, petaloid, twoloop, threeloop, threecorner, fourcorner, guilloche, meander, rope band, dentate band, cross, chevron, zigzag, swastika, lozenge, ring, ellipse, pentagram and hexagram.

2 Search the IconAegean Database in the Element field on rosette, quatrefoil, papyrus, lily, palm, palmette, leaf and petaloid.

3 The actual identity of the flowers represented by these terms, including whether the papyrus and the palm are Egyptian or eastern plants, is treated in Chapter 5 below.

This is perhaps the easiest rosette to construct as the radius can simply be used to mark arcs around the circle circumference, and the 60° angle is immediately made. The quatrefoil as in 3.2 encapsulates in plan all the four-petalled flowers, often among the tiniest of the floral kingdom. It is a special case of the rosette in that its petals form the radiation division 4 design created when the circle is dissected along 4 radii spaced at 90° angles. This angular spacing also suggests a square, and its effect is often exploited in designs as with the square borders of 3.2 and 1.2, the latter also doubling the effect of the 4 division by entering the stamens as a cross. Other flowers are seen in elevation, but their underlying geometric shape is still clear. The papyrus in 3.3 is a segment of a circle, its triangular shape finished by the curve of the circumference arc which represents the edge of the floret. Smaller papyrus shapes are seen in 3.8, and a later more naturalistic form is seen in 2.50 where five papyrus plants spring up from a rocky base. The palm as in 3.5 and the palmette as in 3.2 also exhibit the triangle/segment of a circle shape. They are always shown with a central rib from which the leaf sections spring out. This contrasts with the papyrus which has its flower divisions shown as vertical striations coming from the base. The lily shape mimics the opening flower with a centre piece still in bud and two petals already opening out in volute arcs as in 3.4. In this lily, and in 1.25, the stamens are also shown sprouting up each side of the centre bud. When the shape is reduced to its essentials the curve of the volutes may also be minimised, and then we have the triple bud as seen in 3.11, 1.34 and 1.53. Leaf shapes may be lanceolate in form, carefully showing their pointed tips as in 3.8 and 1.34. They may be rounded, especially when paired as in the double leaf seen around the perimeters of 3.1 and 1.14 and in 1.72. When worked as small details, rounded leaves resemble petaloids. Leaves may be shown blank or may have veins marked. Now, while these individual leaves may not be a specific geometric shape, their use with S spirals suggests leaves shooting from vine tendrils as in 1.34 and 2.2, as also with the quadrilateral spiral shapes in 3.9 and 2.57. Moreover, their multiple use reflects the structure of leaves sprouting from a branch as in the leaf band of 3.10 and the assemblage of bush foliage or a tree canopy in the all-over pattern of 1.72. By the end of the Early Seal Period these floral/geometric elements are worked in amazingly complicated patterns as in 3.11 with the papyrus, C spiral and triple bud and in 3.12 with the palmette, petaloid and J spiral.

The final design in this grouping is the petaloid as in 3.6, and its inspiration is not a leaf or a petal at all but a pure geometric shape, half an ellipse. An ellipse is drawn when a point moves so as to be always equidistant from two foci. Its area may be halved by finding the midpoint between the two foci and using the measurement of a focus to this midpoint as the radius to draw circles centred on each focus. Tracing one circle's perimeter from the ellipse perimeter through the midpoint and joining on to the other circle's perimeter to reach the ellipse perimeter divides the ellipse into two equal areas, each one being a petaloid. The design in 3.7 shows just such a division of an ellipse into two petaloids. The curving nature of this geometric shape echoes that of a petal or leaf and allows myriad design possibilities when joined with spiraliform Elements. When a J spiral is attached to the point of the petaloid it becomes a leaf sprouting out of a vine tendril as in 3.8, or the core of the fluid design of 1.68 with many leaves and spirals curling round. The genius creation of the pure geometric shape of the petaloid to evoke the floral/foliate world is the clearest statement we have of the Minoans' ability to peer into the natural world and see its deep patterning.

When it comes to the animal kingdom, the Minoans also have interesting insights into structure. It is not simply a noting of the inherent reflectional symmetry of faunal bodies. Rather, it is an attempt to search out the particular characteristic of each insect or animal and reveal its structure. In the Early Seal Period the scorpion is a frequent subject, and its stinging tail is seen as a J spiral. With two scorpions, as in 3.13, the tails can swing into an S spiral in the manner of favouring patterns at this time. The spider, also an early favourite, has its eight legs paired so as to form four arcs as in 3.14. Later, with larger animals the body mass is seen as changing in shape through action, and that shape parallels geometric shapes. The great bull in a flying gallop is seen as an elongated rectangle with the upraised tail balancing the head as in 3.15, 3.22, 3.47 and 1.86. The body of a wounded lion is seen as a circle when it is contorted in agony as in 3.16 and 3.34. Sea creatures are seen in leaping arcs like the flying fish of 3.17 and the dolphins of 2.20 and 2.48. When dolphins chase their prey they form a whirl spiral attacking

the bait ball as in 3.18, this image only beginning to be appreciated as we modern viewers are able to see such action close-up on television nature programs.

So, depicting the shape of flora and fauna examples is not wholly dependent on fitting it into the geometric shape of the seal face. Rather, as revealed in the explanation of composing the *Icon*, the depiction starts with the artist's eye recognising the underlying structure of the living entity. If floral, then the geometric substrata of circle division, triangle, arc, ellipse and spiral allow the creation of amazing patterns which fill the early seals. They may then disappear from seal design but not from Aegean art. They stay with the pottery and re-emerge in the later periods where they are wrought in ivory and jewellery and come to border grand frescoes. If faunal, then the images continue since the artist's interest lies particularly in the ability of the active body to take different shapes as it moves. Shape shows the deep patterning of abundant flora. Shape shows the mobility of living fauna. The Minoan artist has grasped this truth and, in seeking to portray the essence of life, has become the impressionist of shape⁴.

The Animal Body and Distinctive Aegean Animal Poses (Plates 3.19 to 3.42)

Animals are the single largest source of subject matter in seal images across all periods. We have already seen how animals placed in heraldic poses comprise a large component of Aegean symbolic images, particularly in the antithetical group design, but here we are concerned with the naturalistic representation of animals, and these give rise to some of the most distinctive and recognisable Aegean creations. Of all animals it is the land mammals that hold the artist's interest most, and they create twenty-four *Icons* to express the mammal life cycle and activities: animal standing, resting, rearing, flying gallop, flying leap, reverse twist, mating, suckling, caring for young, playing, scratching, tethered, penned, netted, sacrificed, distressed, contorted, stalking, holding at bay, chasing, seizing, crunching, carrying the catch and feeding on the catch⁵. Indigenous animals, both domesticated and wild, like the agrimi, hound, stag, boar, cat, ram and bull, are carefully depicted in a variety of situations. However, these indigenous animal poses are extended to have exotic beasts like the lion and fantastic creatures like the griffin also become the *Icon* protagonists. These animal-based *Icons* regularly subsume the whole seal face and this, together with their multiple uses, testifies to the importance of this subject matter to owners and artists alike. All are perceptive renderings of animal behaviour and together represent an innovative artistic experiment in sensitivity to the animal condition.

The first six *Icons* listed show the animal in its most natural poses at rest and in action: animal standing, animal resting, animal rearing, animal flying gallop, animal flying leap and animal reverse twist. All the favourite large quadrupeds – agrimi, hound, stag, boar, ram and bull as well as the lion and griffin – are depicted as the main subjects of the seal designs and are shown in a variety of these poses. The examples in 3.19 and 3.20 of standing and of resting are recorded through all Periods, as in 3.57, 1.3, 1.8, 1.31, 1.40, 1.48, 1.50, 1.55, 1.57, 1.71, 1.72, 1.101, 2.5, 2.17, 2.19, 2.25 and 2.44. The animal rearing is rather less used but is known from the early seals as in 3.21. In Minoan High Art it is used to great effect with the bull rearing up to confront the genius hunter in 3.64 and the lion rearing up in combat with the human hunter in 2.34. These natural poses of standing, resting and rearing are codified into the heraldic poses of statant, couchant and rampant in formal and symbolic compositions. The extreme action poses of running and leaping are crystallised in the flying gallop, flying leap and reverse twist *Icons* seen in 3.22 to 3.24. The flying gallop shows the animal in profile, at full stretch, with forelegs and hindlegs flung clear of the ground, as with the bull in 3.22. It is first seen in the Phaistos

4 I choose this description as a deliberate parallel to those other inspired artists, the French Impressionists, who were impressionists of colour.

5 Search the IconAegean Database in the *Icon* field on animal standing, resting, rearing, flying gallop, flying leap, reverse twist, mating, suckling, caring for young, playing, scratching, tethered, penned, netted, sacrificed, distressed, contorted, stalking, holding at bay, chasing, seizing, crunching, carrying the catch and feeding on the catch.

sealings as in 1.61 and 1.64 and continues in later Periods as in 1.44, 1.46, 1.86, 2.61, 3.15 and 3.47. In these examples the bulls in the flying gallop are masterpieces of animal art. The variation of the flying gallop, the flying leap, where the animal at full stretch leaps on the diagonal down to the ground, as with the agrimi in 3.23, is less used but is no less striking in effect. Consider the agrimia in 1.27 and the agrimi and hound in 2.29. The reverse twist does not refer to a pose where only the animal's head is turned backwards, a pose which is termed *regardant*. The reverse twist has the whole forepart of the animal, its head and shoulders and forelegs, turned 180° to face its hindparts, as with the hound in 3.24 and the bull in 3.29. This twist quite changes the shape of the animal from the expected stretch to full extent in the five *Icons* we have just been examining into a swinging semicircular curve which inherently suggests the potent life force of the animal.

The next four *Icons* form a set to take the mammal through its life cycle: animals mating, animal suckling, animal caring for young and animal playing. Mating is seen in two examples, both of agrimia, in the early prism in 3.25 and in the great gold signet of 2.26. The animal suckling is much more used. Beginning in the Early Seal Period with cows suckling their calves as in 6.67, the *Icon* continues, often in delicate detail, as in 3.26, 1.91 and 2.27, depicting agrimia, cows, does, bitches and sows. Close in sentiment to the animal suckling is the caring for young *Icon* as in 3.27. Here the juvenile animal is not actually suckling at the udder but may be playing with, or nestling close beside, the mother as in 3.61. The animals depicted are mostly cows, bitches, agrimia and ewes and sometimes griffins and lions. Young animals are shown in the animal playing *Icon*, as in 3.28 which appears to be restricted to puppies, and the examples are Minoan High Art or later. To show their pets in this playful way is another mark of the affection Minoans had for their hounds.

Then there is the set of seven *Icons* which record the dark side of animal life in constraint, suffering and death: animal scratching, animal tethered, animal penned, animal netted, animal contorted, animal distressed and animal sacrificed. Animal scratching is where the animal raises a back leg to scratch the offending part as with the bull in 3.29. Hounds, bulls and lions are the usual subjects scratching in Minoan High Art. The back leg seems to be able to reach almost any part of the body – head, neck, belly, side or leg. The affliction may be simply an itch which the animal scratches, as with the bull and the hound in 2.46 and, as such, is more of an observation on animal life belonging to the natural animal poses discussed above. However, it could also be that the cause of the trouble is a wound inflicted by an arrow, as with the lion in 3.16, in which case the animal is truly suffering and will probably die. These images cross over into the animal contorted and animal distressed *Icons* discussed below. The images of constraint are the animal tethered in 3.30, penned in 3.31 and netted in 3.32. The image of tethering belongs to Minoan High Art but even more to the Legacy Period and involves the hound, bull and ram. It can be the simple tying of the hound's collar to some fixed point as in 3.27 or the linking of the animal to a symbolic pillar as in 3.30 and 2.47. The animal penned as in 3.31 begins somewhat earlier with the constraining fence handled as wickerwork, as in 2.19, and continues later with the barrier usually rendered in crosshatching. The bull is the animal most often shown penned although the ram is shown with a wickerwork barrier in 8.58. The animal netted as in 3.32 and 2.36 is a bull and the image belongs to Minoan High Art. The net can also ensnare a bird as in 6.156 or a fish as in 7.14. The suffering of animals is explored in the animal distressed and animal contorted *Icons* as in 3.33 and 3.34. Both are presaged in the early seal examples of animals wounded with arrows, as in 6.5 and 9.105, but both see most activity in the later periods. The animals most often depicted as suffering in this way are the agrimi, bull, lion and stag. The animal distressed as in 3.33 is one of the most used images, particularly within the animal attack Theme where the terrified prey is overwhelmed, as in 3.40 and 2.28. The animal distressed *Icon* links to the animal contorted and animal scratching *Icons* when specific aspects of the distress are emphasised, as with the wounding by spear or by arrow as in 3.16, 3.59 and 2.58. The distress is shown in the body of the animal which may sink down as in 3.33, but it is particularly evident in the limbs, some or all of which may be bent awkwardly as in 1.79. Very often the suffering is expressed by the open mouth as in 3.33 and in 3.40, 3.42, 3.59, 2.28 and 2.58. In some of these examples the tongue is seen protruding. Is this an attempt to depict an agonised cry or bellow? The contorted pose is

the most extreme where the animal coils into a circle in agony as in 3.34 and 3.16. While death may be foreshadowed in the distressed images where the animal is wounded, there is no doubt of it in the animal sacrificed *Icon* as in 3.35. It begins in the early seals and continues through all periods. Bull, agrimi and boar are the sacrificial animals, mostly shown as juveniles. In the early seal examples the sacrifice is indicated by the crossed legs of the animal as in 6.181 to 6.190, while in later images the animal is placed on the sacrifice altar as in 3.35 and 6.192.

The next seven *Icons* portray the animal attack theme: animal stalking, animal holding at bay, animal chasing, animal crunching, animal seizing, animal carrying the catch and animal feeding on the catch. These seven *Icons* comprise the animal attack set and sequence already discussed above in Chapter 2 as compositional devices which also help to layer meaning. However, we should look again at the detail of these images to see how the variety of animal poses we have been discussing contributes to the vitality of these scenes. Among the indigenous fauna, the predators are the cat and the hound, while among the exotic and fantastic creatures they are the lion and the griffin. The prey are indigenous fauna such as the bird, agrimi, stag, bull or an unknown quadruped, except for those images where the griffin and the lion fight and the lion is the expected prey. Extensive use is made of the flying gallop, flying leap and reverse twist since these poses can depict either the predator or the prey. They can emphasise the ravaging ferocity of the predator or the terrified collapse of the prey, as in 3.38 to 3.40, 3.42, 1.92 and 1.93. Yet, the seal artists have many other poses at their finger tips to maximise the depiction of these violent destructive attacks. The predator may be leaping up as with the rearing hounds holding the agrimi at bay as in 3.37 and 1.60, or the lion rearing up over the stag only then to come crunching down on the backbone of its prey as in 2.28. For the prey, the animal distressed or contorted poses, often with open mouth and protruding tongue, convey the animal's agony, as with the bull and stag in 3.40 and 2.28. Such sensitivity to the animal's plight and accuracy in depicting its tortured anatomy come centuries before we see the dying lions of Assyrian art⁶.

Now, as we look over these twenty-four *Icons* created to show the full range of mammal behaviour we are struck by how brilliantly economical the seal artists are in using their skill. Certainly, the flying gallop, flying leap and reverse twist are the most recognisable of all Aegean animal poses, and they form the core of what has become known as the Aegean Animal Style so carefully described by Helene Kantor⁷. They constitute an artistic initiative that sets Aegean designs apart and makes them a desired inclusion in Egyptian and eastern contemporary art traditions⁸. The reverse twist deserves special mention. In capturing this twisting pose, the seal artist has brilliantly found another way to fit the whole animal into the seal face shape while still asserting its vigour. It allows the lion predator to turn and crunch its prey as in 3.40, or the great bull to trample the hunter as in 2.36 when its headlong rush is abruptly stopped as it is caught in the net. Moreover, the reverse twist can also be the core of some other interesting *Icons* like the suckling scenes, as in 3.26 and 1.91, the scratching scenes as in 3.29 and the contorted poses as in 3.34. The artist's eye has seen the shape of the animal change from its full extent to a swinging curve turning back on itself and has encapsulated this new shape in a memorable *Icon*. Perhaps the initial eidetic image was the hound racing along and then abruptly changing course as its prey moved in a different direction, or perhaps it was the mother cow turning to gently muzzle its calf to the udder. The artist saw the changing shape in the body movement and registered it in that happy winnowing of the eidetic image and its core characteristics into the essence of the finished *Icon*. In meeting the constraints of the seal face shape in this particular case, the artist has created an arresting composition and one that might not have emerged in any other art medium. The reverse twist is the most distinctively Minoan

6 Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 180-181, Plate LXXX.

7 Kantor 1947, 1-103 and 1960, 14-25.

8 See AE, 113-119 and 197, Crowley 2021, 199-213 and Chapter 15 below.

of all the animal action poses, and it is rarely copied successfully elsewhere⁹. No other ancient art has produced such an image of animal muscular energy.

This close examination of animal poses in the seal designs widens our appreciation of the creativity of the seal artist well beyond simply cataloguing the poses. Each of the *Icons* showing animals at rest or in action is a memorable image and can, by itself, provide a complete seal design. Yet, each can be a building block in creating other distinctive Aegean compositions of great vitality but also sensitivity. Reflect on the tenderness of the suckling and caring scenes and the playfulness of puppies. Note the life of animals recorded as penned or tethered or netted or sacrificed. Consider the hunting predators bursting with power and aggression, and their poor prey, terrified, wounded, contorted and dying in agony. Appreciation of the animal body and sensitivity to the vicissitudes of animal life have taken the Aegean seal artist into new artistic territory and have created some stunningly beautiful images of the animal world.

The Human Body in Muscle, Movement and Drapery (Plates 3.43 to 3.54)

Human figures are known from the earliest seals, and interest subsequently grows in depicting their form, clothing and actions. In the Early Seal Period the figures are stylised and most are male, shown without clothing as in 1.14, 1.32, 1.74 and 1.75. These stylised humans become a favourite subject in MM II where they are shown holding their tools, products or weapons as in 1.32, 1.37, 1.74, 1.75 and 2.39. At this time some figures are shown with a cloak as in 8.9 and 8.99 and some, as female, wearing a skirt/dress as in 1.15, 1.39 and 1.59 or with long pants marked with a hemline at the calf as in 8.96 and 12.25. In the Experimentation and Minoan High Art Periods the human form is shown in detail with shape and clothing appropriate to females and males, as in 3.43 to 3.56, 3.63, 3.65, 3.66, 3.73 to 3.78, 3.88 to 3.90, 3.94 to 3.99, 2.31 to 2.38, 2.59, 2.60, 2.63, 2.64, 2.67 to 2.72, 1.10 to 1.12, 1.21, 1.24, 1.41, 1.82, 1.85 to 1.90 and 8.100 to 8.129. In the Legacy Period the effect of these creative experiments gradually lessens and so there is not as much variation in detail as in 1.94 to 1.97 and 8.130 to 8.135. By the Late Period we see the complete attenuation and schematisation of the human figure, presumably male, as in 1.51 and 1.102.

In the Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art, significant innovations in naturalistic detail produce depictions of the human figure that are among the most sensitive of all images. With the seal designs we are speaking of relief compositions and there are two Minoan conventions for rendering the standing and the seated human figure: the combination pose, which is the one most frequently used, and the full profile¹⁰. The combination pose classically shows the head and lower body in profile while the upper body is frontal, the swivels to accommodate this twist being at the waist and neck. It is shown in the standing male figures in 3.43 and 3.89 and in the standing female figures in 3.45 and 3.66. The waist swivel can cause problems with the alignment of clothing. For the males the problem is the placement of the codpiece, sometimes resulting in a rather disjointed effect as in 3.43. For the females the problem is the joining of the centre of the bodice on the frontal upper torso and the centre of the flounced skirt on the profile lower torso. When the standing male wears the long kilt as in 3.89 or the long diagonal robe as in 12.148 this problem does not arise. The combination pose is also used for seated female figures as in 3.50 and 1.11 and kneeling figures as in 3.51. With the combination pose the head and lower body regularly face in the same direction although occasionally they are placed opposite as in 3.52 and 12.148. There appear to be no seated males depicted at this time. The profile pose has the complete body in profile, as assumed by the standing female figures in 3.44 and 3.52 and the half-kneeling figure in 3.49, as well as the male figures in 3.60 and 1.82 and the small male figure

9 Some Dynasty 18 wall paintings closely copy this Aegean vitality, AE 113-119, Plates 309-326.

10 Search the IconAegean Database in the Syntax field on combination, profile, frontal, standing, sitting, kneeling, half kneeling, striding, running, somersaulting, falling, lying, processing.

in 3.63. This is also the favoured pose for males wearing the long diagonal robe as in 2.37. With both female and male figures the shoulders are correctly shown while the legs are usually posed slightly parted and, when covered by clothing, are indicated by the division of the long pants or the feet below the long skirts or long robes. The Minoan combination and profile poses parallel the use of the combination and profile poses already seen in the artistic traditions to the east, but they are not direct copies. The Minoan combination pose is closer in effect to the Mesopotamian tradition than the Egyptian canon for the human figure with its precise placement of nipple and navel to accommodate the armpit swivel¹¹. So, does the Minoan innovation consist only of variations of long-used combinations and profile formulas from the east? Not necessarily so. While there may well have been foreign influence there is, no doubt, a strong component of that Minoan eidetic artistic vision operating in the body presentation as well. This enables the seal artists to portray human figures more naturalistically and to imbue them with such volume and movement that they surpass conventions and come to life, convincing the viewer that they can turn, twist, gesture and leap out of the seal face.

Movement is explored by considerable experiment in the actual modelling of the male and female bodies. In all his poses the Minoan male has a distinctive cast. His body appears almost naked since the usual dress of codpiece and kilt provides minimal coverage¹². This allows the artist to show the body articulated and all the muscling needed for each pose. The subtle detail is best appreciated by looking at the sealings 3.43, 3.45 to 3.48 and 2.31 as well as the seals 2.32 to 2.36 and the special poses of the male boulder kneeler as in 4.111 to 4.113 and the tree puller in 5.121 to 5.124 and 5.127. Particular interest is shown in the way extreme active poses are depicted. The archer in 3.46 has his back and shoulders convincingly turned as he draws his bow. The wrestler/boxer in 3.48 has all his muscles rippling as he strides forward¹³. There is even an experimental back view used for the male in 3.45. The sealing depicts his body as glimpsed beneath a diaphanous full-length mantle¹⁴. Then there are all the poses of the leapers in the bull sports *Icons* providing somersaulting and landing bodies as in 3.47, 3.15, 3.22, 1.86, 2.67 and 2.68, and also falling and fallen bodies as in 3.65 and 2.69. The exertions required by war and the hunt also demand vigorous poses. Warriors and hunters stand and stride with great energy as they duel with man or beast and are victorious, as in 2.31 to 2.35 and 2.70. Yet, those same war and hunt images show the vanquished as fallen warriors and hunters, as their bodies buckle and they sink to the ground, their limbs bent up with wounds or stretched out in death as in 2.31, 2.33, 2.36 and 2.70. No other Bronze Age art provides such graphic depictions of male athletic bodies. We must now ask whether the stress on muscling and active poses is simply the turn towards naturalism evidenced in Minoan High Art. It would seem that there is a little more to the images than that. We see here an idealistic portrayal of the male body – young, extremely fit and extremely muscled for extreme action. We will have to wait until well into Classical Greek art to find them again.

For the depiction of the female body there is no corresponding interest in action poses. Overwhelmingly, female figures simply either stand or are seated as in 3.44, 3.45, 3.50, 3.52 to 3.56, 3.63, 3.66, 3.99, 1.11, 1.88 to 1.90, 2.38, 2.59, 2.63, 2.64 and 2.72. The only exceptions are the half kneeling archer pose of 3.49 and the ceremonies of kneeling the boulder as in 4.109, 4.110 and 4.114 to 4.116 and pulling the tree as in 5.121, 5.123 and 5.126. However, each of these is really handled as a slight variation of the combination or the profile pose. The interest in the female form is in its inherent shape, and here we find a certain voluptuousness. The bare breasts and curvaceous buttocks are fully modelled. The bosom is not covered but the lower body is always clothed. This is quite clear when the figure wears one of the

11 AE, 152-159. The Egyptian canon avoids the problems of alignment caused by the waist swivel by placing the swivel below the frontal shoulders at the armpits and depicting the body as profile in a stepping pose below that.

12 Search the IconAegean Database in the Element field on belt and kilt, diagonal robe, tunic, cloak and mantle.

13 This athlete was erroneously first described as showing his back, PM I 689, Fig. 509 and PM III 504, Fig. 349. Some comparisons are suggested under the entry for CMS II.8 280 but not all are back views.

14 Observation of the enlarged photographs of the sealing helped the identification of the pose and the fine overlay of material across the body.

styles of skirt but less so when the figure wears long pants, and so there have sometimes been claims of naked females. However, the female body is not naked, as close inspection always shows the hem line of the pants leg across the calf¹⁵. In some cases, the pants material simply clings to the female shape while nevertheless revealing it as in 3.49, 3.51 and 3.52. In other cases the pants material is diaphanous and reveals the body shape beneath the fabric, all the time providing the outline of the pants and the calf hemline as in 3.53 and 1.21/1.88. So, with the female body always needing to be clothed except for the breasts, the artist turns to an exploration of female dress and how the particular material type fits to the body¹⁶. With standing females the heavier fabrics of the flounced, frilled and fringed skirts mould over the curvaceous buttocks and hang to the ground, just allowing the feet to be shown standing flat as in 3.44, 3.55 and 2.38. Sometimes the flounced skirt finishes at the calf, and the ankles and feet are then shown as in 1.88. With the seated figures, as in 3.50 and 1.11, the interest is in the detail of the heavy flounces and the way they fold across the knees. Finer, softer materials fit closer to the body revealing its shape and, when these lighter materials are also diaphanous, care is taken to show their semi-transparency. We have already noted this above in discussing the wearing of pants, but there are also cases where the full body-covering mantle is woven of diaphanous fabric. In 3.54 the female wears such a mantle knotted at the shoulder, and the whole of her fleecy skirt beneath is revealed. A more subtle handling of this fine fabric is seen in 3.45, noted above, where the male stands with his mantle enveloping, but not obscuring, his body. Indeed, the best seals reveal how the artists have acutely observed the nature of woven materials and how they have been able to record the behaviour of fabric as it drapes over the human body. Even today for the sculptor, seal artist and cameo specialist, to reveal the body through drapery is judged one of the highest skills.

In seeing virtually no interest in depicting the female form in action, have we missed something? Are all upright female figures simply standing still, maybe walking, or, as has often been suggested, are some dancing? Those who see dancing figures in 3.44 and 3.55 point to the curving buttocks shape and see hips swaying to music, and point to the arms raised and see rhythmical movements. Yet, there are other explanations for these features that more closely accord with the full range of renditions of the female form. The curving buttocks shape is always seen in seated female figures and in many upright figures who are clearly not dancing, as in 3.49, 3.52 and 3.53. The arm gestures in 3.44 and 3.55 are the standard forehead, hands high and arms high gestures used by many figures who are also clearly not dancing. Gestures are used in group compositions to link the *dramatis personae* together as seen in 3.63, 3.66 and 1.21/1.88. If the hands and arms do not necessarily indicate dancing, then do the feet? In 3.44 and 3.55 the women's feet are placed flat on the ground, not a particularly convincing dancing pose, especially when one considers that feet orientation is used in other images to suggest movement. The heels are raised to indicate walking in 3.52 and 2.59, and the toes are pointed down to indicate certain small figures are hovering in the air¹⁷ as in 3.55 and 3.56. In addition, there is no suggestion of knee movements moving the drapery in dancing steps. The half-kneeling pose of the female in 3.49 shows how such movements could be managed. Minoan women might well have danced, but one can only conclude that Minoan artists did not choose to portray them doing so. Returning then to the curvaceous outline that the female form assumes in Minoan art, are we to see here the naturalistic rendering of the generous bosom and buttocks shape typical of the Minoan woman, or is there another artistic agenda? Some enhancement of these two essential womanly characteristics would seem in order for an art that searches for the essence of each entity, a parallel to the exaggerated muscling of the Minoan male.

15 Note the careful CMS descriptions of the *saumwinkel*, the angle of the hemline.

16 Search the IconAegean Database in the Element field on skirt, flounced, frilled, fringed, fleecy, side-pleated, lappet, long pants, flounced pants, diaphanous pants, diaphanous, scarf, gown, cape and mantle. On the identification of the fabrics used as silk, linen or wool see Chapter 8 below.

17 See the discussion of epiphany figures in Chapter 12 below.

Perspective, Emotion and Dramatic Impact (Plates 3.55 to 3.66)

There was an interest in **perspective** from the beginning in the sense that the eidetic impulse which is the basis of Minoan art always provided for a foreground and a background in the depiction of scenes. Animals are seen against the trees or the rocky mountainside in the earliest seals. The removal of their immediate background in the interests of clarity and the attaching of the rocks to the upper seal perimeter as well as the lower creates the glen motif which lasts throughout the art. Yet, the possibilities of developing this into perspective compositions was not immediately exploited, and the stage convention became the most used method of organising scenes through into Minoan High Art. This is where the use of a groundline orients all figures who either stand on a line marking the lower perimeter of the seal or have some groundline marked as rocky ground or paving, as for example in 3.63, 3.66 and 2.38. When the stage convention is refined to the extent of having a single subject with no background and only a groundline, then the composition convention is the focus with all its concentration on that single subject, as for example in 3.59 and 3.64, and for the bull sports scenes, as for example in 3.15, 3.22 and 3.47. This gives the impression of the focussed subject existing outside time or place. Yet, the artist often provides an additional element in order to identify a human figure. This is widely used in MM II when the worker figure is identified by the tool he holds, as in 9.1 to 9.9. It is of particular identifying significance when the element is placed at the back of a human figure as with the grand pillar in 3.98, the crocus in 12.62 and the dolphin in 12.173.

However, in Minoan High Art, experiments in perspective begin anew, termed here the mountain view¹⁸. In 3.55 a group of four women gather, but they do not stand on a groundline in the stage convention. Each is placed at a different level against the background, and the flowering plant clumps are likewise placed freely in the intervening space. Accommodating the small epiphany figure above causes some difficulties, especially with the artificial construct of the skyline beneath her feet. The scene in 3.56 is a less successful attempt at handling perspective, partly because so many *Icons* are included¹⁹. There is a foreground where the dolphins leap down. There is a middle ground with the ship coming to the shore where the woman and man are standing. There is a far ground where the tree grows on the shore on the other side of the ship (the rocky ground that is usually the tree's base is obscured by the ship's hull). The epiphany figure is placed on high in the same plane as the ship, the woman and the man. The complex compositions in 3.55 and 3.56 both have to do duty as cultscapes, and the need to convey that extra level of meaning complicates the experiment at perspective. The landscape of 3.57 is a much clearer example, with the young agrimi resting in the foreground, the stream flowing in the middle ground and the rocky hillside rising in the far ground. Now the confined space of the seal face was never going to be a convenient canvas for the perspective experiment. It is likely that the space provided by wall painting was the catalyst for artists to try large-scale compositions initiating attempts at perspective. Nevertheless, the eidetic concept of the seal artists is still the point of view taken by these fresco artists, as will be further discussed in Chapter 13.

Experiments to show **emotion** in humans and animals are also seen in Minoan High Art. The attempt to register voice is among the most interesting, particularly with animals. There are many mammals where the open mouth may well be emitting bleats, moos, roars or other sounds appropriate to the animal's situation. The young wounded animal in 3.59 raises its head and opens its mouth to cry out in pain, as does the wounded bull in 3.33. This is a regular detail in the animal distressed *Icon*, sometimes forming part of the depiction of the prey in animal attack scenes as in 3.40, 3.42, 2.28 and 2.58. The open mouth may be emitting a softer sound as the mother animal gently muzzles her young in 3.26, 1.91 and 2.27. Then who could forget the cry of the male agrimi mating in 2.26! The relationship with humans may also

18 Search the IconAegean Database in the Syntax field on mountain view.

19 See the entry for this seal in the IconAegean Database which lists eight *Icons* and the discussion on complex compositions, Crowley CMS B8, 131-147, which suggests that having five icons or fewer preserves clarity. The gold signet in 3.55 uses four and manages to present much information clearly.

cause the animal to use its voice, somewhat gently towards the man in 3.60, but in considerable distress as the herders take away their young in 3.62. Emotion, with or without voice, is built into the creation of the animal suckling and animal caring for young *Icons* which explicitly target nurturing bonds as in 3.61, 3.26, 3.27, 1.91 and 2.27. With humans the depiction of emotion is much more circumspect. Two human male heads, 3.58 and 3.70, have open mouths which may indicate speaking or singing. The other heads have closed mouths and none exhibits emotional states. There are no female heads featured. With the full-size human figures the heads are necessarily very small, and although some features are shaped, their tiny size prevents their revealing emotion. So, we are left with the pose of the figures. Already in the discussion of fallen warriors and hunters we have commented on the anguish of their stricken bodies as in 2.31 to 2.34 and 2.36, but for happier emotions the poses are composed and formal, mostly finding expression in gesture. A series of 15 gestures codify human interactions and the emotion associated with each. The gestures are named descriptively for the part of the body touched or the position of the hands or arms or for what is held in the hands, as in forehead, shoulder, heart, chest, hips, greeting, reaching, beckoning, pointing, arms high, hands high, holding hands, power, brandishing and toasting²⁰. A full discussion of these gestures awaits in Chapter 9, but we should note here the gestures that particularly display emotion on the part of the gesturer: greeting, forehead, shoulder, heart and holding hands. In 3.63 the woman welcomes the epiphany figure with a greeting gesture, although it is not clear whether the men and women are greeting or farewelling each other in 2.60. The forehead gesture is given by the woman in 2.63 and the man in 2.72 in the presence of the epiphany figures appearing before them. This gesture is a recognition of the majesty of those epiphany figures, and so has often been called the prayer gesture. The shoulder gesture appears to signify attending or listening, as with the woman in 3.66 watching the others in the group. This is also the gesture when the woman is waiting/listening before a shrine as in 9.69. The heart gesture denotes a relationship between the man and the woman as in 3.66. An even stronger connection is intimated by the holding hands gesture made by the woman and man in 3.45 and 3.56. In the complex scenes on gold signet rings, the use of combination and profile poses and gesture are used together to animate the figures and to enliven communications between them. Consider the groups in 3.55, 3.56, 3.63, 3.66 and 3.73 where gestures link the individuals and the conversation can almost be heard. Perhaps it is not surprising that in a traditional society the display of emotion is constrained within accepted gestures. The artists have registered this formality but have also shown in these particular images, not only in the gesture but also in the stance of the people and the inclination of their heads, that powerful emotions are being expressed.

Finally, we come to the question of **dramatic impact** and the relationship between the artist and the viewer. We have already commented in the explanation of the *Icon* composition that the eidetic underlay places the viewer's eye in the position of the artist's eye and that this allows the viewer directly to apprehend the image. The point of view of artist and viewer being identical creates an immediate bond, and thus the subject matter can make a direct appeal to the senses of the viewer. We have just been discussing how the emotional state of humans and animals is a significant topic and one that is treated in graphic detail. These poses and moments of interaction have a profound effect on the viewer. The artist is entreating the viewer to appreciate the mother animal's tenderness and to empathise with the stricken animal's suffering, to see in all the gestures the social interactions that makes us most human. The artist-viewer bond is most clearly on view in the extended scenes where the artist chooses the moment of greatest intensity in action or feeling and emphasises its most telling aspects in order to affect the viewer. In war and hunt scenes the climactic point of the fatal thrust makes maximum dramatic impact, as with the hero and the great beasts in 3.64, 2.34 and 2.35 and the warrior victors and the warriors vanquished in 2.31 to 2.33. The climactic point on the animal attack scenes is the violent crunching/seizing of the prey by the predator as in 3.39, 3.40, 1.80 and 2.28. In the bull sports the moments of

²⁰ Search the IconAegean Database in the *Icon* field on gesture and in the *Element* field on forehead, shoulder, heart, chest, hips, greeting, reaching, beckoning, pointing, arms high, hands high, holding hands, power, brandishing and toasting and see the discussion on each gesture in Chapters 9 and 12 below.

maximum danger are depicted: the successful somersault as in 3.15 and 3.47, the landing as in 3.22 and 2.68 and the desperation of the fall as in 3.65 and 2.69. All these danger moments are depicted in such a way as to evoke the most intense reactions in the viewer: elation and wonder at a leaper's success, and horror and desolation when the leaper fails. In the series of cultscapes, human figures are depicted enacting ceremonies. In each case the viewer is treated as the audience present at the ceremony, as in 3.66, 3.45, 3.51, 3.55, 3.56, 3.63, 3.73, 2.38, 2.60 and 2.72. Indeed, it is extremely likely that the viewer has been present at just such ceremonies and that the seal image is deliberately crafted to remind the viewer of those moments and the emotions felt at those times. In all, this direct appeal by the artist to the viewer is not seen fully again in Greek art until the Hellenistic period. In other ancient societies of the Bronze Age the subject matter of art is distanced from the viewer because it is created to worship the all-powerful gods, to celebrate the exploits of great rulers or to record in the tomb the daily needs to be supplied for the afterlife. Art is created for the eyes of those omnipotent gods, great rulers and tomb owners. To directly involve the human viewer in the art, to stir emotion and memory, is the genius of the Minoan seal artist.

Brief Experiments (Plates 3.67 to 3.84)

Now, there are several images in Minoan High Art that do not seem to fit easily within the iconographic repertoire, and we should note these experiments even as we cannot be sure of the meaning of their novelty. Of course, if we had the complete output of the Minoan seal artists before us, we might find that these images are not so singular. However, with only a fraction of that output remaining to us, we are restricted to seeing these images as brief experiments without lasting effect. Nevertheless, it is important to register their creation as part of the Minoan artistic innovation.

Do the seal images experiment with **portraiture**? The heads of the human figures in the Early Seal Period are handled generically with the nose accentuated and all figures stylised. Later, in Minoan High Art, human figures appear in complex scenes, and the heads are necessarily very small, providing little chance to register individual traits. Yet even in these scenes, it might be expected that some special effort could be made to depict the facial features of an important individual when that individual is the human protagonist performing an important ceremony. Yet even here the head is often a blob, and the facial details are barely noted at all, as in 3.55, 4.109 to 4.115 and 5.121 to 5.127. When the VIPs are shown full figure the heads are shown in more detail, but even here the facial features are generic as in 3.49, 3.54, 3.88 and 3.89. Then there are the detailed male heads which appear for a short time as sole subjects in the Experimentation Period and early Minoan High Art Period and have been called portraits. The 14 extant illustrations of human heads as sole subjects are all rendered profile and all are of males²¹, as with the seven illustrated in 3.67 to 3.72 and 3.58. There is no similar treatment for female heads. The male heads seem rather to be in a natural progression of featuring human heads following all the earlier animal heads. There is differentiation in these male heads with respect to hairstyles and beards. Some heads have straight hair and some have curly hair which at times seems to be carefully coiffured. When there are beards they are all straight. The lines at the chin in 3.58 are like beards in other examples. All heads have defined straight noses and prominent chins when shown clean-shaven. The nose and lips are carefully delineated, and two have the lips open as if speaking or singing. The example in 3.72 appears to be that of child with a shaved head. Do these heads comprise an experiment in portraiture, and if so, why is it restricted to males? The small number of examples across a short period of time, as well as the absence of clearly idiosyncratic features, would incline argument away from any real interest in portraiture on the part of the Minoans²². Perhaps the Minoan heads are simply a general statement of the three stages

21 Search the IconAegean Database in the *Icon* field on human head profile. For the human head frontal, which appears to carry different connotations, see the discussion in Chapter 11 below.

22 See Foster 1997, 127-140 and VIV-LV, for proposals in favour of portraiture, and Pini 1999, 661-669, rather doubting portraiture.

of man's life – child, clean-shaven youth and bearded age. This age range should be kept in mind when looking for comparisons across the seal images. There are some children and younger adults as in 2.60 and 12.88 and some older men with corpulent bodies as in 3.76. However, the overwhelming number of the depictions of human figures, female and male, show them in full maturity in the prime of life. The group of male profile heads certainly fits within this human figure survey since most are young, fit men with some outliers of youth and age. So, perhaps it is not portraiture that the artists are attempting here briefly, but something revealing of the life stages of a man.

Are there any examples of **narrative** or **history**? The six images 3.73 to 3.78 all involve the activities of humans, and each shows iconographic details that have no parallel. Accordingly, they are all listed as one only images²³. Is there a story behind these actions or does the detail record a singular event? The first three scenes may each be the visualisation of a story, myth or legend, familiar to all Minoans. In 3.73 the central image is of female and male human figures facing each other and standing close. She holds a bow, aiming an arrow at him. He has his arm crooked through the bow so the arrow cannot be fired and, in that hand, he holds a piriform rhyton. What is the story that lies behind this bow contest? In 3.74, a female figure is seen against a tricurved arch pattern. The pose of her legs and feet indicate that she is not standing but rather reclining. In standard Minoan iconography, the tricurved arch pattern registers a watery expanse and the surface of the sea. If this meaning holds for this image, then the female figure is floating on the surface of the sea. CMS has presented another view. It has rotated the image 90° to the left to place the figure upright, suggesting that the pose of the legs might indicate a dancer and that the tricurved arch pattern should not be read as water²⁴. Yet, if the standard iconography is followed, then this enigmatic image may also be the visualisation of a myth or legend that all Minoans would immediately recognise. In 3.75 a male figure rows/poles a skiff-like vessel, the muscles of his upper body magnified to stress his prowess. Comparable examples show similar vessels, here termed boats, that are light-weight craft meant to be used in sheltered waters, in contrast to the many substantial sailing ships suitable for the high seas. These boats are rowed or poled by female figures. Why is a male being featured on this particular seal? Is there a story behind this exceptional image that we cannot now trace? The last three scenes may represent the recording of actual events. In 3.76, there is an all-male scene where the central figure bows to the ground before a standing male figure with a staff while two older males stand watching and gesturing. It is the only image clearly showing such obeisance. Is this a worshipper bowing to the statue of a male god, or a subject bowing to his king, or the performance of some other ceremony? There are some indications that life-size sculptures were known in Crete but we have no comparable images that could be read as depicting kingly power and authority. In 3.77, another all-male scene, the two figures on the left are engaged in dialogue while two young men stand watching and gesturing. It is a pity that damage obscures the detail of the central figure but he does appear to be kneeling on a cushioned stool. What is clear is that he is holding an item of unusual flowing shape. Is this item a diaphanous mantle like the one worn in 3.45? If so, then we may be seeing the recording of the presentation of a prestige garment as a singular honour to a celebrated man/warrior/citizen. In 3.78 enough of the composition remains for us to see a great sailing ship with crew ready at their oars. Superimposed on ship and crew is a huge horse. Does this image record the momentous event of the arrival of the horse in Crete? The exceptional nature of these six images causes us to ask whether we have here a glimpse of the telling of stories or of historical recording, but we cannot provide a sure answer. Lack of comparable images and the absence of a deciphered literature defeat us again.

The seal artist attempts to present **ephemeral shapes** to the viewer in 3.79 to 3.82. Movement in humans and animals is of consuming interest to the Minoan artist, as is the ever-changing surface of water. Yet there are other moving shapes, even more fleeting, that also capture the attention of the

23 On the authenticity of the gold signet in 3.73 see Sourvinou-Inwood 1971, 60-69; Pini CMS B1, 145-149; Krzyszkowska AS, 333.

24 CMS II.8 264, description, 407.

innovative Minoan artist: droplets of liquid, billowing smoke and the brief life of insects. In 3.79 a section of the composition in the gold signet of 3.55 is shown. The piriformshape hovering symbol behaves as a piriform rhyton releasing the liquid it contains. This shower of droplets is shown as tiny upraised dots in the gold surface. In 3.80 and 3.81 the bee smoker is already warmed, sending out the billowing smoke which will soon daze the bees. The smoke is depicted as linked semicircles surrounding the smoker and its handle in 3.80 while in 3.81 the smoke is presented as zigzags. In 3.82 the ephemeral life of the butterfly is recorded in four stages linked by the tails curled into a whirl spiral. Moving clockwise from the base, the swelling chrysalis is about to burst, then it becomes the emerging butterfly drying its new wings, then the adult enjoys life with wings fully spread, and then finally the end comes in the dismembered body pieces. The butterfly has considerable presence in mainstream Minoan iconography, giving added significance to the graphic portrayal of its ephemeral life in 3.80.

As the Minoan artists are acutely conscious of shape it is not surprising that they see **similar shapes** in different items. Take the example of the squid from the sea and the vase with its double curved handles. In 3.83 we see the classic shape of the squid. Being placed within seaweed fronds gives it striking similarity to the vase with its double handles centred in its usual surround of branches as in 1.42 and 1.84. The depiction of the sunburst as in 4.85 to 4.90 and the sea urchin as in 7.24, 7.28 and 7.70 to 7.72 show similar shapes, but the context glosses the identification. Then there is the case where a familiar motif is linearised and the resultant image, although similar, evokes different responses. The palm and palmette feature in the iconography from the Early Seal Period, but there is a development in Minoan High Art which sees the creation of a palmette tree, as in 3.84 and 5.100 to 5.102. The basic design is the palmette standing up from a curved mound of earth with additional fronds springing up from the base. It is clearly the linearised form of the tree growing from rocky ground when it is a palm tree with base fronds as in 3.5 and 5.97. When flowers or fruits are added as circles each side of the trunk, variations of the design appear. However, with this transition, something strange has occurred, and the images now look more like a face with staring eyes and a moustache. Indeed, these palmette trees are often described as masks or lion masks²⁵. We do not know whether the resultant designs did look like a face or a mask to the Minoans. We also do not know whether the playfulness with design that appears to us in all these similar shapes also appeared to them, although this is not impossible.

Minoan Art Styles and the *Icon* Essence (Plates 3.85 to 3.99)

So, after examination of the innovations of mainstream Minoan art and a brief look at some transient experiments, we come to define Minoan artistic style. The search for individual style as it pertains to a seal artist is virtually impossible. As we noted in Chapter 1, like the rest of the people of Bronze Age Crete, the seal artists have left no names for identification and the small number of seals extant in any discrete age makes it difficult to discern a “hand” or “school”²⁶. When excavation permits, it is possible to recognise the output of a palace workshop, as in the MM II seals of the Mallia Workshop, thus allowing a summation of style for this seal group. Similar difficulties assail the researcher who tries to address the concepts of palatial art and provincial art. Yet, without doubt the Minoan seal artists have ventured into many areas of artistic creativity during the long floruit of the seals and, at each turn, have granted us an original point of view of this world and the other. How then to define Minoan artistic style?

Certainly, from the discovery of the Aegean civilisations in the 19th century CE, art historians have tried to define Minoan art and Mycenaean art or, more generally, Aegean art. Working largely from frescoes, wall paintings and pottery, they have used the usual terminology for art discussions to arrive at

25 Artemis Onassoglou, in her analysis of the talismanic seal designs, lists various floral and foliate motifs, among them the *Papyrus-Motiv* (*Löwenmaske*), and discusses the “lion mask” design, CMS B2, 48-54, Tafel XX.

26 John Younger’s work on the “Lion Master”, the “Spectacle-Eyes Group” and other Stylistic Groups attempts this differentiation, Younger 1978, 1979b, 1981a, 1981b, 1983, 1984a, 1985a, 1986, 1987, 1989a and 2000.

a description, if perhaps not yet a definition, of the art²⁷. It is helpful to turn to the style characterisations usually applied to the wider art media to see if the Minoan seal corpus falls into any of them. Then, further, we should examine the relationship of the seal images to images in the other Minoan media and to later Mycenaean art. This latter exercise must await a fuller exposition in Chapters 13, 14 and 15 after we have explored in detail the seal images, but we can begin with the terms of art style that art historians have regularly employed.

Is Minoan art decorative or descriptive? It certainly is decorative, as the many seal images of the Early Seal Period attest as in 3.85 to 3.87. A whole range of designs incorporate geometric and floral motifs into delightful patterns, as discussed in 3.1 to 3.12. The neat precision of reflectional symmetry organises flower and leaf units into balanced patterns. The swirling vigour of rotational symmetry unites spiraliform and floral into moving kaleidoscopes. This reliance on decorative forms disappears from the seal repertoire with the move into the Experimentation Period, but it has already seeded the decorative designs of pottery in MM II and subsequently into the other media where they live on as principal motifs or as border pattern. However, in using the term decorative there is no suggestion of superficiality or of lack of meaning since in all of them the deep structure of natural forms is intimated. Yet, the seal images are also descriptive of this physical world and its living inhabitants. In so many of the images across Chapters 1 to 3 we have seen patterns in Cretan rocks, water and trees, as well as humans and animals. The animals are of particular interest since, from the earliest seals, so much effort goes into portraying the different characteristics of each species and their actions. This interest is fully exploited in the Minoan High Art Period, as we see in 3.19 to 3.42. Then there are the images of human figures as in 3.43 to 3.66, which are generally descriptive, but the term descriptive may need to be refined by using more subtle distinctions like impressionism and naturalism, as discussed below. So, Minoan art contains strands of both the decorative and the descriptive.

Is Minoan art formulaic and/or symbolic? Compositional devices like the antithetical group and heraldic poses organise humans and animals into striking images. The Mistress/Master of Animals as in 3.88, 1.24, 2.24 and 2.64, and animals at the grand pillar as in 1.26 and 2.65 are among the most memorable. The ultimate source of their identity may lie to the east, but their incarnation in Aegean seal designs brings new clarity and economy, as with the animals one head pair in 8.79. Then, the Minoans create their own formulas, as with the roles of VIPs seen in the VIP with familiar as in 3.89, the VIP granting audience as in 3.98 and the VIP appearing on high as in 3.99²⁸. Other formulas involve animals like the bull head with double axe as in 3.91, the double axe in 1.83 and 2.41, and items important to warriors like the boar tusk helmet in 3.93 and the cloak knot and eight shield in 2.42²⁹. Closely allied with the formulaic strand in Minoan art is the symbolic³⁰. Indeed, the formulaic regularly incorporates the symbolic. Here we see fantastic creations like the hybrid humans as in 3.90, 1.90, 1.99 and 2.43, geniuses as in 3.64, dragons as in 1.89 and griffins as in 3.92, 2.44, 1.57 and 1.98, as well as living exotic animals as with the lions in 3.89, 1.26 1.58, 2.24, 2.64 and 2.65 and the monkeys in 3.98 and 2.14. Again, the use of heraldic poses promotes precision in the formulaic depiction of both living animals and fantastic creatures. With the creation of scripts, the signs themselves are another example. For seal artists, the hieroglyphic script signs are not simply the representation of certain items but are subjects worthy of

27 See Crowley 1991, 226-228, "Reviewing Aegean art history discussions" for an outline of these earlier attempts. See also Rodenwaldt 1921, Matz 1928, Snijder 1936, Furumark 1941a, Kantor 1947, Gronwegen-Frankfort 1951, Vermeule 1964 and 1975, Stevenson Smith 1965, Lang PN II, Boardman 1970a, Walberg 1976 and 1986, Laffineur 1985, Younger 1988, Morris 1989 and 2000, Rehak and Younger 1998, Niemeier CMS B3, Immerwahr AP, Schiering CMS B1 and 1992, Shaw 1993, Wedde 1992, 1995a and CMS B5, Morgan 1988 and 2020, N. Marinatos 2000, Warren 2000b, Poursat 2008, Krzyszkowska 2010, Anastasiadou 2011, Chapin 2004 and 2016, Vlachopoulos 2016a and Paintbrushes, Panagiotopoulos 2020, and Blakolmer 2010d and CANP.

28 For discussion of these *Icons* see Chapter 12 below.

29 For discussion of these items see Chapter 8 below.

30 Search the IconAegean Database in the Theme field on symbolic.

great effort to carve exquisitely and to position on the seal face, as in 1.17, 2.3, 2.8, 2.9 to 2.12 and 2.53. There are very strong formulaic and symbolic strands in seal design from beginning to end.

Is Minoan art abstract or surrealist? These are not designations expected in the list of possible art types for Minoan images. Yet, some images suggest the abstract. Semicircles are a favourite inclusion in LM I images, handled by holding the circular bit at an angle to the seal face, especially as seen in talismanic seals. This technical expertise helps present details like the octopus tentacles. In 7.46 to 7.48 the octopus is depicted with its tentacles curling around. Yet, there are many examples where an array of interlinked semicircles suggests the octopus shape as in 7.49. to 7.51. Gradually, the compositions have become more and more about the shape of circles and semicircles until the octopus is lost and we have designs verging on the abstract. Then there is a discrete group of seals emanating from the site of Zakros³¹ and gathered in the IconAegean Classification under the heading of Zakros fantasy as in 2.45. The human, animal and inanimate units of the Zakros corpus can be found as motifs in other seal designs, and in that way the Zakros images find a place in the wider Minoan repertoire. However, it is how these units are combined in the Zakros images that takes us into surreal territory. The Zakros fantasy images thus remain a separate, if distinct, strand in seal art deserving of their own analysis, and they do not initiate a continuing art style.

Is Minoan art realistic? Realism does not seem to be an appropriate designation since at every turn the depiction of realistic detail of the natural world does not seem to be the primary concern of the artist. Yes, for the fauna there is any amount of fur, feather, horn and claw, while for humans there is careful revealing of body shape, muscling, hairstyles and clothing. Yet, the true subject of the image is rather the significance of mortal activity or the vitality of mammalian life, as we have been discussing. Even with the brief interest in male profile heads as in 3.67 to 3.72, the detail seems more attuned to showing age group differentiation than true individual likenesses. Certainly, there is nothing to compare with the preoccupation with individual identity in Egyptian and Mesopotamian art. Realistic portraiture ensured that the Pharaoh and the tomb owner would be recognisable for eternity. The Mesopotamian tradition too, in some eras, found it necessary to identify their rulers with arresting detail. When we look on the face of Men-kau-re or the head of Sargon we have no doubt that we are in the presence of a particular mortal. We may allow that these royal portraits carry elements of the ideal as we note the perfect symmetry of Men-kau-re's face and as we register that every curl of Sargon's hair and beard sits in its appointed place, but we know the individual man. We look in vain for such parallels in the Aegean.

Is Minoan art idealistic? There is certainly idealism in the representation of female and male figures in the Minoan High Art Period as in 3.43 to 3.54. There are almost no children and very few older bearded and/or corpulent men. Virtually all figures are in their youthful prime. The females have a distinctive silhouette emphasising bosom and derriere. The males are granted a muscular active form. The faces, when shown in detail, are unblemished and composed. We will not see such calm beauty in the human form again until we arrive at Classical Greek art.

Is Minoan art naturalistic? This is the term most often used to describe Minoan art and especially Minoan High Art. Naturalistic is applied with its usual meaning as an art style which portrays the natural world with surrounding landscape rendered in recognisable form and with living creatures obeying all the rules of structure and movement of bone and muscle. The examples of a hunt scene in 3.94, the chariot scene in 3.95 and the woman server gesturing before a shrine in 3.96 remind us of that strand of naturalism that pervades the seal images. There was always an incipient naturalism in the early seals with their animals and associated landscape details as in 1.31 and 1.55. Then, following the Phaistos Sealings revolution as in 1.59 to 1.66, the trend increased to its full expression in Minoan High Art as in 1.76, 1.79 and 2.15. Yet even at that peak of artistic expression the art is not fully naturalistic. The Minoan artist is ever constrained by other demands. Accordingly, the description of art should be Minoan naturalism to reflect these Minoan modifications to pure naturalism.

31 See Weingarten 1983 and 2009, 139-149 and Anastasiadou *Forthcoming*.

Is Minoan art impressionistic? Now, as we have seen, any naturalistic tendencies in the seal images are tempered by the desire to present the essence of the subject. This is the importance of understanding the power of the *Icon* composition. As addressed in Chapter 2, and argued through examples 2.25 to 2.36, the *Icon* is the core of Minoan design. Humans, animals, action scenes and community ceremonies are not shown simply as one sees them but in a certain mode of presentation which alters details to involve the viewer. This certainly is impressionism although, in the seals, it cannot be handled by colour as with the original Impressionist painters. In the seals it is handled by shape. Gathering all our evidence of how landscape and living creatures are depicted, we are struck by the importance of their shape. The rocks become rounded outcrops or looping borders as in 3.88, 1.27, 1.60 and 2.58. Vegetation declares its identity but also its relationship to the living participants through its shape as in 3.94, 3.96 and 3.99. The animal conveys its happiness or distress predominantly through its shape, as seen in the distinctive Aegean animal poses 3.19 to 3.42. The bull sports give perhaps the most telling use of shape to create the bull sports *Icons*, and thus they assail the viewer with maximum intensity as in 3.15, 3.47, 3.65, 3.97, 1.86, 2.68 and 2.69. If we had to characterise all the above impressionist effects then we would have to say that Minoan seal artists are the impressionists of shape.

Thus, to some extent and in particular cases, the regularly-employed style terminology is able to describe the art of the seals. Which style epithets we can apply to the art of the seal images somewhat depends on which era is being discussed. Remembering that we are talking about an art tradition that spans fifteen centuries, we can see that different styles are in favour in different eras. For the Early Seals the decorative and the formulaic apply with geometric and floral designs and heraldic animals. Still, there is also an incipient impressionism in the way some landscape and animals are portrayed. We lose the decorative for seal design at the beginning of the Experimentation Period, but the formulaic continues through to the end of Minoan High Art (and beyond) while the naturalistic and impressionistic strands become stronger.

Yet, art historians may have missed much in trying to explain Minoan art in these currently used terms. Minoan innovations were pioneered in the 2nd millennium BCE, and terminology used for later European artistic styles may not provide the most appropriate descriptions or be the best to recognise the early date of these Minoan creations. Minoan art is full of innovations that distinguish it from contemporary arts to the east and which place it at the beginning of European art. Should we not try to find new terms that can express this originality? Scholars of Minoan and Mycenaean art have, in the past, made use of the generally accepted art terminology, but they have also formulated their own epithets. Five idiosyncratic terms, coined to describe the particular nature of Aegean art, spring to mind. Henriette Gronweger-Frankfort, in an early assessment, directed our attention to the inherent movement in much Minoan art with her term “absolute mobility”, a term which does recognise the attempt to portray the essence of life in the natural form³². When Michael Wedde analysed the composition of scenes in seal images he used the term “pictorial architecture” to explain their formality and inherent structure³³. In his essay on floral subjects in fresco, Peter Warren coined the term “essentialism” in presenting the idea generally of flowers in contrast to the depiction of an individual blossom³⁴. Fritz Blakolmer has discussed Aegean iconography widely and deeply, always revealing the variety and originality of Aegean art, particularly in the frescoes. In his introduction to the recent overview of Aegean iconographic studies, he has described Minoan Art as the “Brilliant Child Prodigy” of the Eastern Mediterranean³⁵ in order to encapsulate its very early success in creating so many new features. With the term, “Minoan idiom”, Lyvia Morgan attempted to gather the disparate features of Minoan art under one heading, and she has recently expanded its meaning to be a general term for the way Minoan art handles its subject

32 Gronweger-Frankfort 1951, 185-216.

33 Wedde 1992, 181-203.

34 Warren 2000b, 364-380.

35 Blakolmer CANP, 9-17.

matter³⁶. It is a most useful term, and one I shall use in this book. Each of these scholars has seen the very special nature of Minoan creativity which holds across all the art media, and each has helped towards a definition of Minoan style that can encompass the variety and yet see the commonality.

In our efforts to find new terms to recognise Minoan artistic creativity and the early time period of its floruit, we must also acknowledge that previous assessments have largely depended on which particular art media provided most examples. As has been noted earlier, much of the discussion of art in the Aegean sphere has to date been particularly reliant on pottery and fresco studies. This was especially the case for the early researchers. In recent years, study of the Theran frescoes, with so many of their compositions largely intact, has been foremost in these art history investigations, and it has provided enlightenment on so many issues. However, as was also noted earlier, pottery is limited in its range of subject matter, and fresco begins late in the artistic tradition.

Have we been looking in the wrong place for answers all this time? It is the seals that have the answers to our many questions of source, style and nomenclature. Taking the viewpoint of the seal artist provides the connection for all the disparate strands and gives us a definition for Minoan art that holds for the fifteen centuries and across all media. At the end of these three Chapters addressing the art of the Aegean seal, I come back to the analysis of the designs which shows that the essence of the subject rather than its surface form is the true subject of Minoan art. This, I have argued, underlies the creation of the *Icon* to control design. With its eidetic point of view and its coalescing of the original-essential-elaborate images, the *Icon* is the compositional imperative of Minoan art. I believe that the style of Minoan art can be named the Icon Essence.

36 Morgan 1985, 5-19 and AWP, 21-44.

Plates 3.1 to 3.99

Beautiful Geometry and Natural Shapes

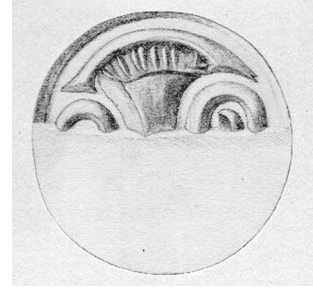
flower and leaf forms



3.1 – rosette, leaf band
(II.1 228/EM III-MM IA)



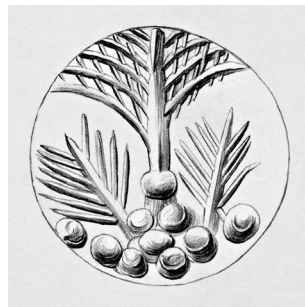
3.2 – palmette, quatrefoil
(II.1 450/EM III/MM IA)



3.3 – papyrus
(II.2 142/MM II)



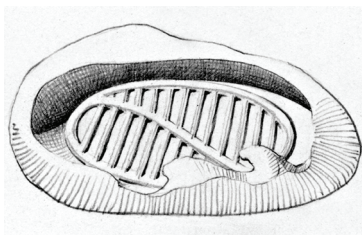
3.4 – lily flower triple bud
(II.2 316a/MM II)



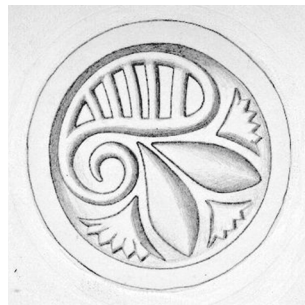
3.5 – palm tree
(VI 157/MM II-MM III)



3.6 – petaloid
(II.1 260a/EM III-MM IA)



3.7 – ellipse halved, two petaloids
(II.1 347b/MM II)



3.8 – petaloid, papyrus, leaf
(II.5 209/MM II)



3.9 – vierpass spiral, quatrefoil, leaf
(II.6 199/MM II)



3.10 – leaf band
(II.1 222a/EM III-MM IA)



3.11 – papyrus, C spiral, triple bud
(II.2 6/MM II)



3.12 – palmette, petaloid, J spiral
(II.8 20/MM II)

Beautiful Geometry and Natural Shapes

insects and animals



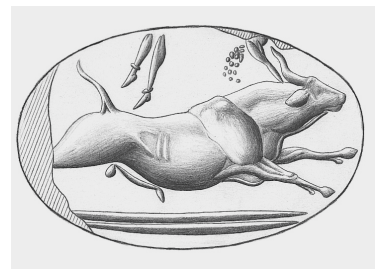
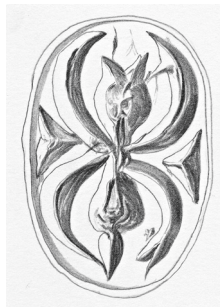
3.13 – scorpions, S spiral
(II.1 250b/EM III-MM IA)



3.14 – spider
(VII 15b/MM II)



3.15 – bull, flying gallop
(II.7 38/LM I)



sea creatures



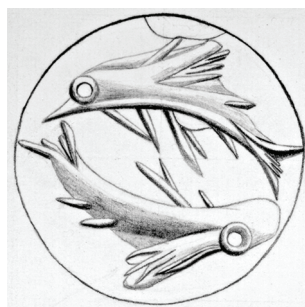
3.16 – lion distressed, contorted, scratching
(II.6 91/LM I)



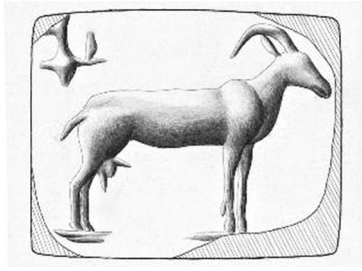
3.17 – flying fish skimming
(IS 121/LM I)



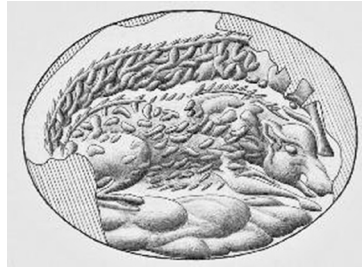
3.18 – dolphins, whirl spiral
(II.6 155/MM I-MM II)



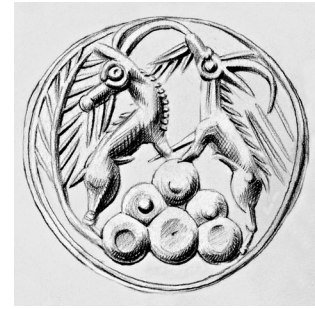
The Animal Body and Distinctive Aegean Animal Poses



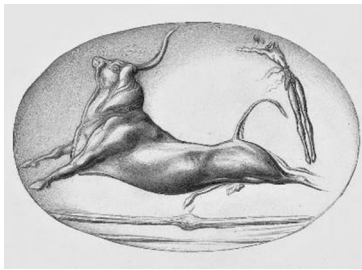
3.19 – animal standing
(II.8 378/MM III-LM I)



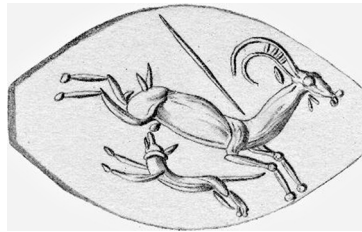
3.20 – animal resting
(II.6 72/LM I)



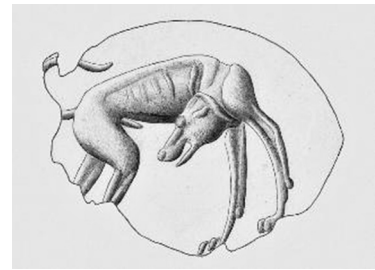
3.21 – animal rearing
(VI 129/MM II)



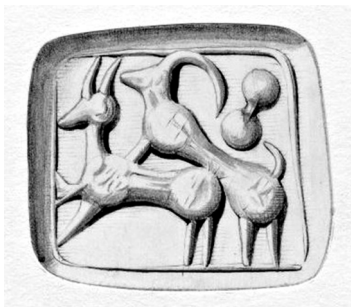
3.22 – animal flying gallop
(II.6 161/LM I)



3.23 – animal flying leap
(XII D15/LM I)



3.24 – animal reverse twist
(II.6 75/LM I)



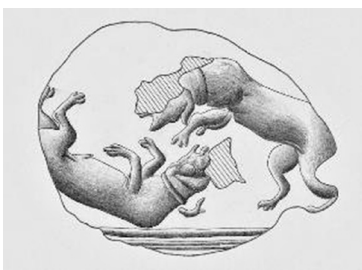
3.25 – animals mating
(II.2 306a/MM II)



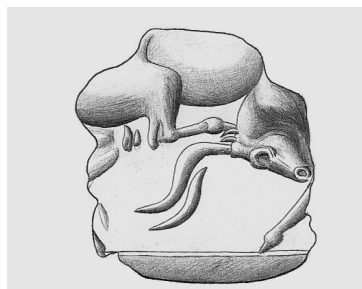
3.26 – animal suckling
(VS 1A 156/LM I)



3.27 – animal caring for young
(II.7 65/LM I)



3.28 – animals playing
(II.6 79/LM I)



3.29 – animal scratching
(II.7 53/LM I)

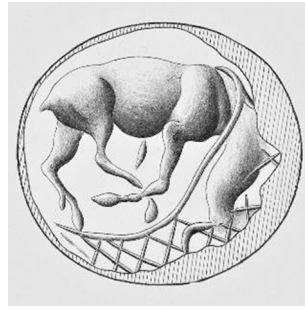


3.30 – animal tethered
(II.3 40/LB II-LB IIIA1)

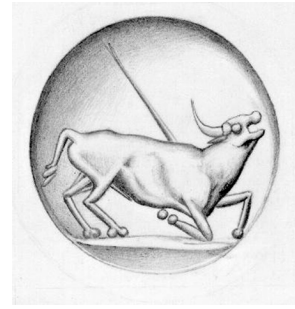
The Animal Body and Distinctive Aegean Animal Poses



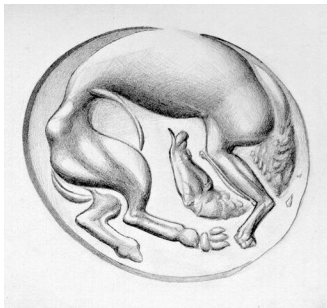
3.31 – animal penned
(VI 408/LM I)



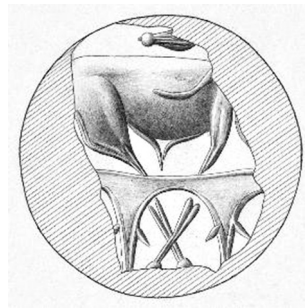
3.32 – animal netted
(II.6 49/LM I)



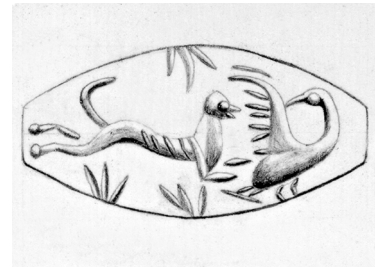
3.33 – animal distressed
(II.2 60/MM II-MM III)



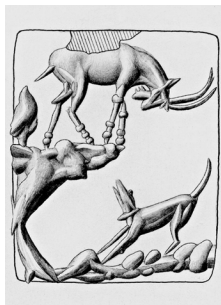
3.34 – animal contorted
(VS 1A 132/LM I)



3.35 – animal sacrificed
(II.8 481/LM I-LM II?)



3.36 – animal stalking
(IS 75/LM I)



3.37 – animal holding at bay
(VI 180/MM III-LM I)



3.38 – animal chasing
(II.8 354/LM I)



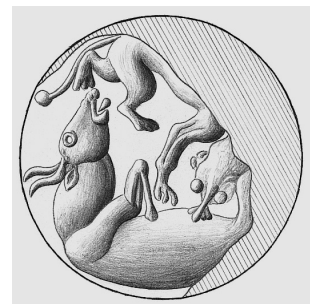
3.39 – animal seizing
(II.8 356/LM I)



3.40 – animal crunching
(II.1 419/LM I-LM II)



3.41 – animal carrying the catch
(IV 285/LM I)



3.42 – animal feeding on the catch
(II.7 102/LM I)

The Human Body in Muscle, Movement and Drapery

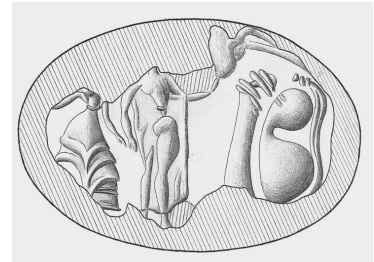
body conventions



3.43 – combination
(II.6 36/LM I)



3.44 – profile
(II.6 13/LM I)



3.45 – back view
(II.7 5/LM I)

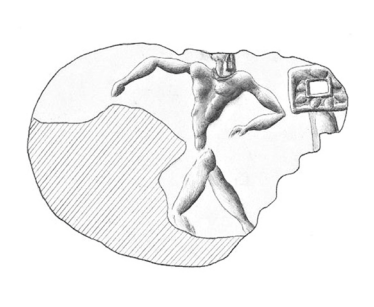
the male body



3.46 – archer half kneeling
(II.6 21/LM I)



3.47 – leaper somersaulting
(VS 3 392/LM I)



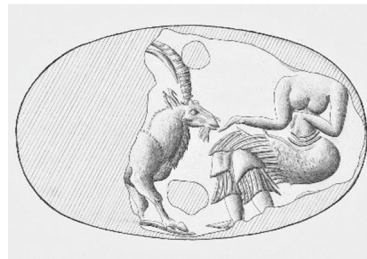
3.48 – wrestler striding
(II.8 280/LM I)

The Human Body in Muscle, Movement and Drapery

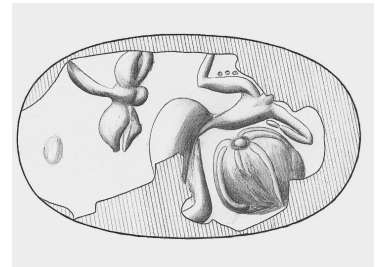
the female body and drapery



3.49 – half kneeling
(XI 26/LB I-LB II)



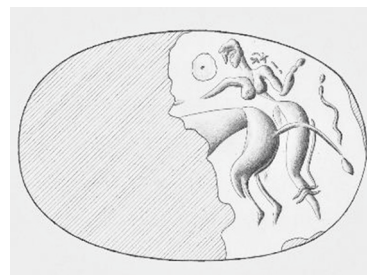
3.50 – seated
(II.6 30/LM I)



3.51 – kneeling
(II.7 6/LM I)



3.52 – pants with calf hemline
(II.6 26/LM I)



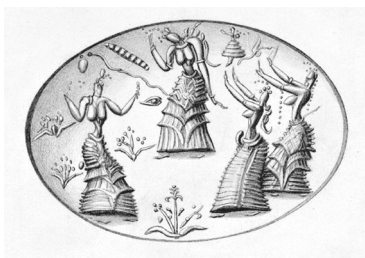
3.53 – diaphanous pants
(II.6 35/LM I)



3.54 – diaphanous mantle
(II.3 16/LB I)

Perspective, Emotion and Dramatic Impact

perspective



3.55 – mountain view
(II.3 51/LM I)



3.56 – mountain view
(VI 280/LM I)



3.57 – mountain view
(II.8 376/LM I)

emotion



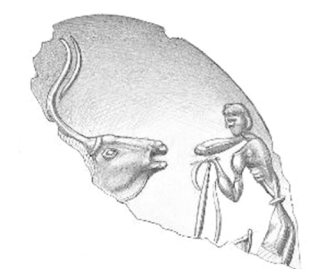
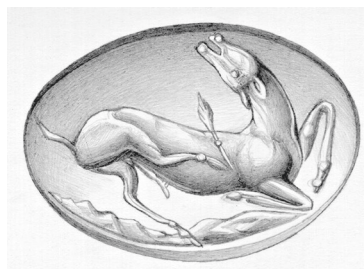
3.58 – human head profile
(VI 293/LM I)



3.59 – animal distressed
(VS 1A 154/LM I)



3.60 – man and animal
(II.8 233/fragment)



Perspective, Emotion and Dramatic Impact

emotion



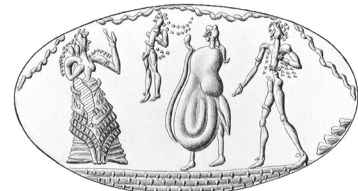
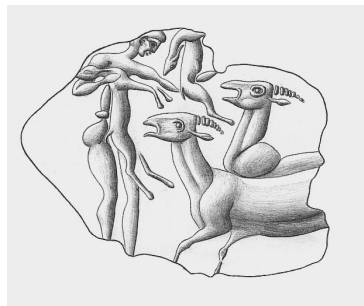
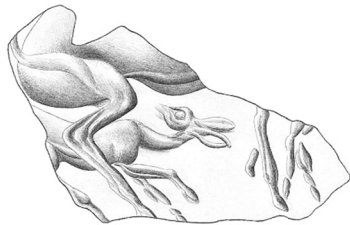
3.61 – animal caring for young
(II.8 508/LM I)



3.62 – herder with animals
(II.7 30/LM I)



3.63 – gesturing
(VS 2 106/LM I)



dramatic impact



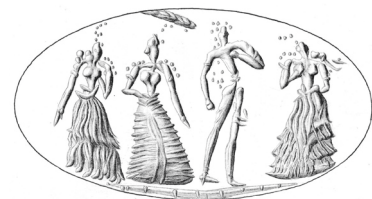
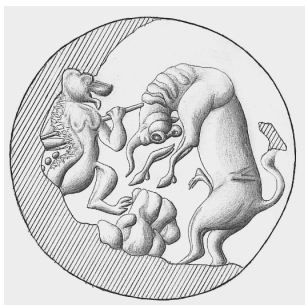
3.64 – climactic point
(II.7 31/LM I)



3.65 – leaper falling
(II.6 40/LM I)



3.66 – human couple, gesturing
(VS 3 68/LM I)

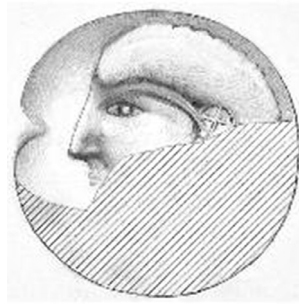


Brief Experiments

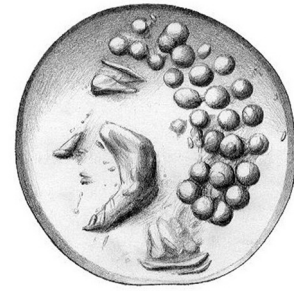
portraiture?



3.67 – man, head
(II.8 40/MM II-MM III)



3.68 – man, head
(II.8 42/MM II-MM III)



3.69 – man, head
(XI 18/MM III-LM I)



3.70 – man, head
(I 5/LB I)



3.71 – man, head
(II.3 13a/MM III-LM I)

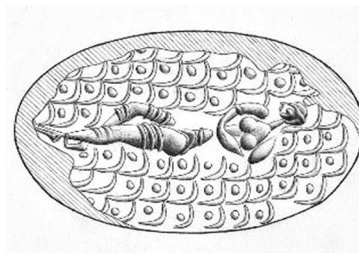


3.72 – man, head
(II.8 41/MM II-MM III)

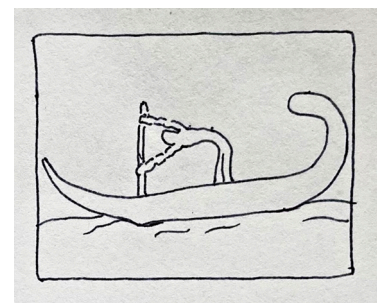
narrative? history?



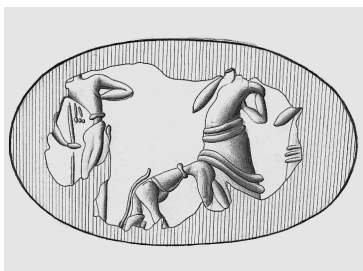
3.73 – one only image
(XI 29/LM I)



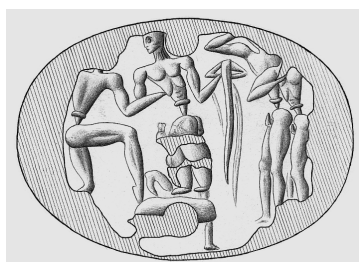
3.74 – one only image
(II.8 264/LM I)



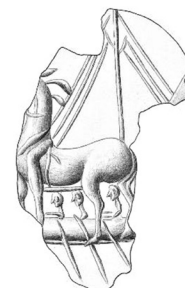
3.75 – one only image
(Rower Cushion/LM I)



3.76 – one only image
(II.7 3/LM I)



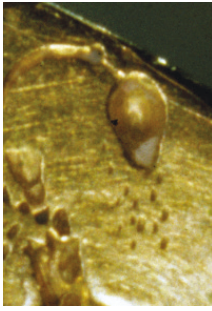
3.77 – one only image
(II.7.2/LM I)



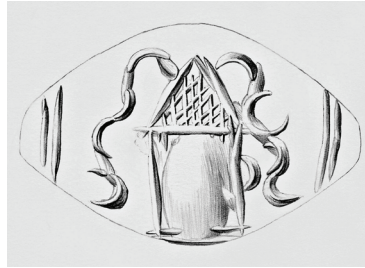
3.78 – one only image
(II.8 133/LM I)

Brief Experiments

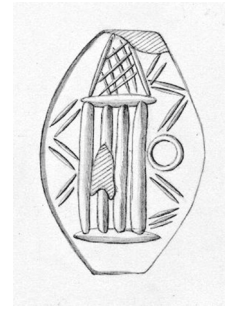
ephemeral shapes



3.79 – droplets of liquid, detail of 3.55

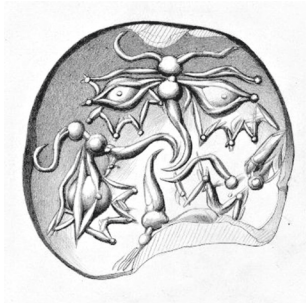


3.80 – bee smoker, smoke
(VI 201/LM I)

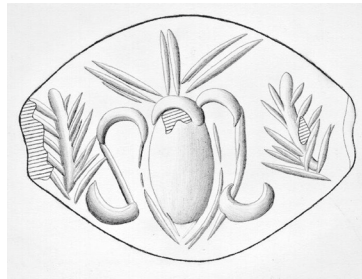


3.81 – bee smoker, smoke
(II.3 203c/LM I)

similar shapes



3.82 – butterfly
(II.3 22/LM I 80)



3.83 – squid, seaweed
(VS 1A 204/LM I)



3.84 – palmette tree
(VS 1A 181/LM I)

Minoan Art Styles and the *Icon* Essence

decorative



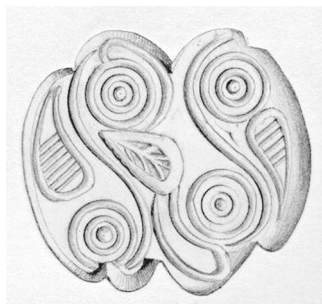
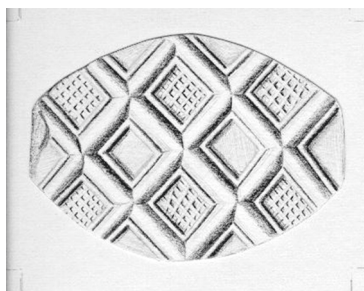
3.85 – lozenge grid
(II.2 11/MM II-MM III)



3.86 – ring, petaloid, leaf
(II.2 30/EM III-MM IA)

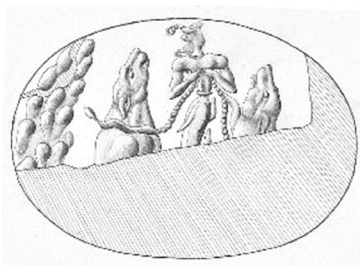


3.87 – rosette, rope band, palmette band
(II.8 9/EM III-MM IA)



Minoan Art Styles and the *Icon* Essence

formulaic and symbolic: human figures and hybrid human



3.88 – Master of Animals
(II.8 248/LM I?)

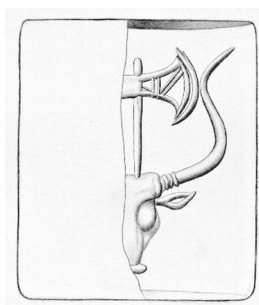
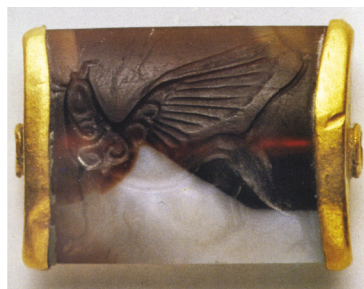


3.89 – VIP with familiar
(II.8 237/LM I)



3.90 – birdwoman
(II.7 129b/LM I)

formulaic and symbolic: animals, fantastic creatures and artefacts



3.91 – bull head, double axe
(II.3 11/LB I-LB II)



3.92 – griffin, heraldic pose
(I 271/LB I-LB II)



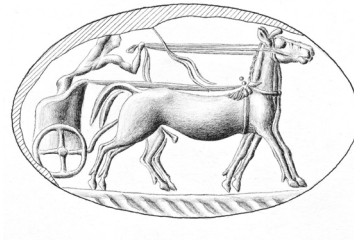
3.93 – tusk helmet
(I 260/LB I-LB II)

Minoan Art Styles and the *Icon* Essence

idealistic, naturalistic, impressionistic



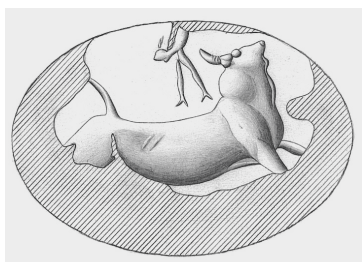
3.94 – hunt scene, landscape
(VS 3 400/LM I)



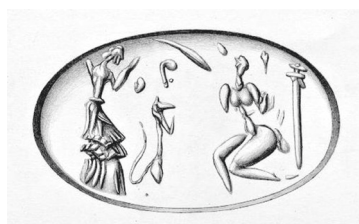
3.95 – chariot scene
(VS 3 391/LM I)



3.96 – server gesturing
(VS 1A 176/LM I)



3.97 – bull, flying gallop
(II.7 36/LM I)



3.98 – VIP granting audience
II.3 103/LM I-LM II)



3.99 – VIP appearing on high
(VI 281/LM I)

PART 2

INTERPRETING AEGEAN SEAL IMAGES

Chapter 4 The Earth and Sky Surround

With PART 2 the iconography enquiry proper begins. We have seen through the art discussions above that the development of the seals progressed through to the Minoan High Art Period when consummate artists in full command of their technical skill were able to do anything they chose with the seal medium. Now our attention turns to the iconography, to the images the Minoan artists created, to the detail they thought important to include and to the metamorphoses wrought through the variation and attenuation in the following era of the Mycenaean ascendancy.

The first subject to explore is the world around us – the earth we stand on and the sky above as we look up¹. We begin the Chapter with a survey of how the Minoan seal artist documents the nature of the soil, rocks and water of this earth and the celestial bodies and continues with descriptions of these motifs if they endure past the LM IB destructions into the Mycenaean age. The interpretation section which follows focusses on the Minoan creations, discusses the significance of these features and explains why so much attention is paid to these natural phenomena. The Mycenaean changes are treated in Chapter 14.

Land and Mountain

Land and Mountain – *Early Seal Period* (Plates 4.1 to 4.15)

Land and mountain elements are termed rocky ground, boulder, boulder with plants, glen and marbling. The early seals show rocky ground by delineating rocks and stones as separate items in geometric shapes. They may be triangular as in 4.1 and 4.9, circular as in 4.4, round as in 4.7 and 4.8, oval as in 4.3 and 4.5, or even rendered as a scale pattern as in 4.6. These rocks and stones provide a foothold for various quadrupeds and birds while a rounded boulder provides a seat for a human figure in 4.3. However, the rocks/stones do not always subtend the creatures but sometimes encircle them as in 4.7 to 4.9. This is the early form of the glen motif where the encircling rocks and stones represent the rocky landscape against which the creature is pictured. Rocks and stones do not necessarily need animals or human figures to feature in a scene. By the end of this period round stones can be the main subject matter. They are the sole subject in 4.10, are associated with plants in 4.11 and placed beside a wickerwork panel in 4.12. The precise arrangement of the smaller stones in 4.11 highlights the two boulders behind which which long pointed leaves spring out in curves, the first appearance of the boulders with plants motif. Some scenes with animals also show rocky ground associated with plants as in 4.2, 4.4 and 4.5 but in some images the link is made specific. The detailed depiction in 4.13 shows the genius standing on stones from which a special plant sprouts, the same plant as is placed in the ewer the genius holds². The stones are the earth part of the tree growing from rocky ground *Icon*³. This motif is already important enough to be featured as the sole subject in 4.14. Rocks are piled up to form a rocky mountain as in 4.15. This image has a nature subject with the agrimi and the vegetation, but the pose of the animals within an

1 Search the IconAegean Database in the Element field on rocky ground, boulder, boulder with plants, glen, marbling, stalagmiteshape, waveline, wateredge, tricurved arch pattern, sunburst, moon disk, moon crescent and skyline. Search in the *Icon* field on tree growing from rocky ground and kneeling the boulder.

Search the IconADict Database for the definition of each term or refer to IAS.

2 For further detail on the genius see Chapter 10 below.

3 This *Icon* is treated fully in the discussion of its plant part in Chapter 5 below.

antithetical group composition and the careful arrangement of the rocks in a pattern place it with the symbolic representations of 4.13 and 4.14.

Land and Mountain – Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art (Plates 4.16 to 4.33)

All the aspects of rocky landscape seen in the Early Seal Period continue through into Minoan High Art. The modelling of the rocks becomes more subtle in the Experimentation Period, providing some beautiful examples of rocky crags as in 4.16 to 4.18 where they are again the support of animals. Nature scenes continue with rocky ground and plants surrounding both native and exotic fauna as in 4.19 to 4.21 and 4.31 to 4.33. The glen motif is used in 4.33. Ships sail past a rocky headland in 4.23. The marbling of the rocky ground in 4.21 and 4.32 is a delicate new detail. Increasingly, human figures are represented within this rocky landscape, and they may be humans or deities⁴. The glen motif provides background for the scene where humans attend a seated female deity in 4.24. The tree growing from rocky ground is featured in 4.22 where it over-shadows a boulder kneeler and in 4.27 where it is the focus of the pulling the tree ceremony⁵. Rocky ground provides a firm foothold for the tree puller in 4.27 and the genius hunter in 4.26. A shrine is built on a base of rocky ground in 4.28. Rocks or boulders are a suitable seat for the female deity accompanied by her familiar in 4.29. Round stones are piled into a rocky mountain which is in the centre of the antithetical composition subtending the female deity in 4.25. A rocky mountain is the central focus of the antithetical group of animals in 4.30. The use of a single stone takes on new import in this period when found in cultscapes. The stalagmite shape, an upright stone of about knee height, stands before a woman in 4.90. A boulder of reduced size stands near a shrine in 12.51. Boulders with plants are placed near shrines as seen in 4.28 and 4.64. The single large boulder has a particular role to play, as in 4.22 where a woman kneels draped over it. This boulder is always more or less an oval shape but its size and its careful modelling are points of note. Here, the large boulder is the focus of human activity in the *Icon* of kneeling the boulder. It is always portrayed within a cult scene and provides, in the nine iterations discussed below, 4.109 to 4.117, the record of one of the most important ceremonies for the Minoans.

Land and Mountain – Legacy and Late Periods (Plates 4.34 to 4.39)

Some uses of rocks, stones and rocky ground continue into the Legacy Period. Rocky ground support is given to the bull in 4.34 while the glen motif surrounds left, above and right. Shrines are built on rocky ground as in 4.35 and 4.36. However, the number and range of the usage becomes attenuated. Particularly noticable is the absence of the boulder kneeling scenes. As the seals move into the Late Period a few images show rocky ground as in 4.37, but increasingly the rocks become schematised into circles and triangles as in 4.38 and 4.39, if they are shown at all.

Water, River and Sea

Water, River and Sea – Early Seal Period (Plates 4.40 to 4.51)

From the earliest seals, water is rendered as a regular undulating line, called a waveline, as in 4.40, and this continues through into Minoan High Art. The earliest seals also present river water as spirals, as with the coil spiral in 4.41 and the J spiral coming out of rocks in 4.1. In 4.42 water is rendered by a meander. Early depictions of ships at sea also use J spirals to indicate the surrounding waves and, glen-like, they are placed above and below the ships as in 4.49 and 4.50. The waveline is also used to delineate the sea surface with the two dolphins leaping above it in 4.51. When the triton shell is given sole subject prominence as in 4.48, its origin in the sea is recorded in the waveline surround. All these examples present animals, sea creatures and ships against their expected natural watery milieu which is recorded

4 For identifying which human figures are deities see Chapter 12 below.

5 The pulling the tree ceremony is discussed in Chapter 5 below.

as a spiralliform motif or the undulating line of a meander or waveline. However, there are images where spirals, meanders and undulating lines, including all-over zigzag patterns, are granted sole subject status as in 4.43 to 4.47⁶. These motifs are geometric forms, but they are also parallels to the patterned water depictions in scenes like those described above. The deep modelling of the undulating line and dots in 4.45 gives the effect of a waveline stream beside rounded stones which in turn recalls the treatment of the round stones in 4.10 and 4.12 above.

Water, River and Sea – Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art (Plates 4.52 to 4.69)

In the Experimentation Period naturalism in compositions increases, and we have in 4.52 the image of a young agrimi resting beside a stream with a rocky hillside stretching beyond. This is one of the earliest renditions of the mountain view design concept. The stream is handled as a triple waveline and the rocky ground of the hillside as replications of rounded stones. Other design concepts created at this time are the landscape, seascape and cultscape, with one of the indicators being the wateredge motif fashioned to render the water/land interface⁷. In the seascapes of 4.53, 4.54 and 4.60 the wateredge is the detailed depiction of knobbed excrescences recording rocky formations below the sea which frame the sea creatures. In 4.60 the excrescences are stylised beside the dolphins diving down through long seaweed strands. In landscapes and cultscapes, as in 4.63 and 4.66, the wateredge knobbed excrescences are used for the seashore and the banks of a stream. At other times the wateredge is handled as a row of rocks as in 4.65 or a set of small vertical lines as in 4.64. The waveline continues to represent the surface of the water at the interface where it buoys up ships and living beings, particularly where the milieu is marshy land. In 4.55 and 4.57 it is strongly modelled. In 4.56, 4.58 and 4.67 to 4.69 it takes the original form of the undulating wavy line. In 4.59 and 4.62 the waveline is a series of arcs. In 4.61 and 4.65 the waveline is a zigzag line below the hull⁸. For indicating an expanse of water, the tricurved arch pattern is developed in Minoan High Art as in 4.63. In this motif the sea surface is depicted in the form of overlapping scales with the apex of each scale pushed out into a little loop, with the scale itself containing a small arc or dot and with the whole surface taking on the appearance of a diamond or net pattern. Each of these details mimics a feature of the watery surface, and together they inject movement into the whole image. It would be hard to envisage a better pattern for the depiction of the restless movement of the sea⁹.

Water, River and Sea – Legacy and Late Periods (Plates 4.70 to 4.72)

Moving into the Legacy Period the simple waveline is still used as in 4.70. However, the many other designations for water and its interface with land are lost. By the time of the Late Period it is difficult to tell whether waves are being indicated in the increasingly schematised designs as in 4.71 and 4.72.

Sky and Celestial Signs

Sky and Celestial Signs – Early Seal Period (Plates 4.73 to 4.84)

In the Early Seal Period the sun appears as a whirl spiral sunburst as in 4.73 and 4.76 while the moon appears as a moon disk as in 4.74 and 4.75 and a moon crescent as in 4.77. The design in the centre

6 The curving lines in 4.44 are not snakes. See Anastasiadou explaining her Motif 19 ‘Snake’ a, CMS B9, Vol.1 181 and Vol. 2 500, 700 and Plate 24 and Motif 20 ‘Snake’ b. On the absence of snakes in Minoan iconography see IAS, 351.

7 In her extended treatise on Minoan art and culture, Lyvia Morgan has explored the depiction of coastal land, rocks, rivers and sea as recorded in wall paintings and pottery and, to a lesser extent, niello and seals, Morgan 1988, 32-39. The knobbed excrescences noted there as shoreline are covered here by the term wateredge.

8 The summary treatment of the waveline as crescents and zigzags is characteristic of the talismanic seals.

9 It was the technical mastery of rendering this eidetic view of the sea surface that gave rise to my concept of the *Icon* and to my originally naming the theory of Aegean art based on it, the “Thalassa Theory”, Crowley 1991, 219-230.

of the hieroglyph seal in 4.78 has a central sunburst, and the surrounding circles may be moon disks. When there are no human or animal figures to orient the celestial signs, the signs themselves take up the importance of sole subject status. There are whirl sunbursts in 4.79 and 4.80 and a swastika in 4.84 which can be seen as a simplified sunburst with implied revolution. The moon crescent is seen in 4.81, interestingly with a dot, possibly a star, at its nether tip. The use of the pillar in both 4.82 and 4.83 to pair two sunbursts or two moon disks is particularly notable.

The hieroglyphic signs CHIC 033 and 034 are listed as being sourced in sky, land and water images¹⁰. Sign 033 appears to be the whirl spiral sunburst.

Sky and Celestial Signs – *Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art* (Plates 4.85 to 4.99)

In the Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art the sunburst, moon crescent and moon disk continue as motifs. The sunburst is regularly used beside a human figure, an animal or a fantastic creature when they are featured as a sole subject as in 4.85 to 4.89. In complex scenes, celestial signs are placed above human figures: a sunburst in 4.90 and 4.91, a sunburst and moon crescent in 4.92 and a moon disk in 4.93. A moon crescent is seen above an animal attack scene in 4.94 but the image is too damaged to be sure of the full composition. The sunburst now has straight rays compared with the earlier forms and may stand alone or be modelled on a boss as in 4.92. A new motif, the skyline, appears at this time¹¹. This motif is different from the other three celestial signs in that they represent astronomical bodies which can actually be seen in the sky, but there is no line in the sky to be recorded by the skyline. Thus, it is an artistic construct. It is placed above the heads of human figures in cultscapes and may be rendered by a single wavy line as in 4.91 and 4.97 or as a series of parallel wavy lines as in 4.92, 4.95 and 4.96. It comes to be used as a single curved line swinging behind the neck of fantastic creatures like the genius in 4.98 and as a zigzag above the griffin in 4.99.

Sky and Celestial Signs – *Legacy and Late Periods* (Plates 4.100 to 4.108)

As the seals move into the Legacy Period the celestial signs continue the Minoan High Art usages. The sunburst, moon crescent and skyline are seen in the complex scene of 4.100 which includes genius figures and a seated deity. The sunburst is placed above heraldically posed animals in 4.101 and 4.107. In 4.106 the sunburst is placed above a hunt scene with griffins as predators. It also accompanies fantastic creatures when they are the sole subject like the genius carrying the catch in 4.102 and the bullman in 4.103. In most cases the sunburst is the usual rayed star but in both 4.100 and 4.101 it is encased in a ring. In 4.106 and 4.107 the sunburst has many rays, either terminating in small circles or with small circles placed in the interstices of the rays. This extra detail creates an effect reminiscent of earlier whirl sunbursts as in 4.73 and 4.79. Skylines are seen springing out from the neck of the sphinx in 4.104 and from the upper body of the Mistress in 4.105. By the time of the Late Period these motifs have all but disappeared, with the sunburst beside a schematic quadruped in 4.108 apparently being the last vestige of celestial signs usage.

Iconographic Interpretation: Sacred Surround

The discussion now turns from the description of the images of the earth and sky to interpreting their meanings. Interpretation of the images under the Mycenaean ascendancy will be undertaken in Chapter 14. The Minoan understanding is expounded below in the realisation that the careful depiction of the earth and sky images, their early creation and their longevity point to deeper meanings. An overview of the significance of the earth and sky images is presented first, followed by an interpretation of their symbols, and then the important kneeling the boulder ceremony is discussed.

¹⁰ CHIC, 16-18.

¹¹ The descriptive term skyline is preferred to Evans' name "heaven line".

The earth images of rocks and water are among the earliest subjects depicted in the Early Seal Period and they remain important to the end of Minoan High Art. At the beginning they are regularly used as sole motifs on the seal design but increasingly they come to form an integral part of scenes of animal and human figure activity. The images of the earth are delineated with great interest in detail, particularly the rendition of stones, boulders, rocky ground and the surface of water. It is not always discernible from the line drawings but in the original seals and their impressions the detail is clear. In the impressions, stones and rocks are small protrusions of roughly hemispherical shape or are modelled striations producing a marbling effect. Boulders are shown with surfaces smoothed, but their indentations and swellings suggest ragged blocks tumbled along in torrents and worn smooth by the water flow, just as one sees in river beds to this day. Water in rivers or sea is shown with patterned surface or various shapes to indicate its wash against ship or shore. Such loving care in depiction bestows an added importance on the subject. Presenting the earth forms calls for Minoan artistic ingenuity¹². The land of Crete does not provide the extended river vistas of Egypt and Mesopotamia which have inspired their artistic landscapes – scenes of the Nile marshes or of scale mountains and level Euphrates flows. Crete's vistas are of rocky hillsides and summer torrents coursing down through mountain gorges to a restless sea. These aspects are continuously referenced in the seal designs, and through small but clever details the artist is able to present their own familiar landscape to the viewer. In doing so the artists also create some of the most potent symbols of Minoan art in the rocky ground, boulder and waveline. Their ubiquitous usage and the potency of the symbolism is remarkable. Additionally, the ever-present threat of earthquake and tsunami evokes a humbling respect for, even reverence of, the land and sea from this island people.

The sky images begin early and come to be used in two ways. They may be placed above scenes of animals or human figures, just as one may expect to see celestial phenomena in real life. They may be placed adjacent to a sole subject animal or fantastic creature or human figure, thus signifying some special import. Accordingly, the meaning of the sky images is twofold. There is the immediate recognition of the importance of the sun and moon as natural phenomena influencing life on earth. Then there is the symbolic use of these images to suggest contact with the abode of divine beings and a spirit realm beyond death.

All this leads to the conclusion that the Minoans viewed the earth and sky surround as their physical home in contact with their metaphysical space. They saw the heavens above, the water in their streams and surrounding sea as well as the rocky ground beneath their feet, the very earth itself, as sacred.

Earth Symbols: rocky ground, boulder and waveline

The seal images make a good case that rocky ground in all its manifestations is to be viewed as symbolic of the sacred earth which has the power to sustain all living things. The rocks themselves are featured as sole subjects in early designs without accompanying animate life as in 4.10 to 4.12, thus announcing their importance. Rocky ground is the base for a shrine as in 4.28 and 4.98, is the foothold for a man performing the pulling the tree ceremony as in 4.27 and is the support for the victorious genius spearing the bull in 4.26. In all three it is as if the power of the earth is welling up to ensure the strength of the construction or to increase the vitality of the living creatures in their activities. This also appears to be the case in the scenes where animals stand, rest and run through the landscape. Certainly, the early seals show animals closely linked to the ground, even as it is shown in geometric forms of triangles and circles as in 4.1, 4.2 and 4.4 to 4.9. When more naturalistic representations are used the rocky ground subtends, supports and wraps around animal life in the most imaginative ways as in 4.16 to 4.21. When rocky ground is piled up into a rocky mountain, then further insights into the Minoan view of the earth are revealed. The rocky mountain¹³ becomes the focus of the antithetical group of agrimia in

12 Olga Krzyszkowska acknowledges the difficulties confronting the seal artist in trying to depict landscape, Krzyszkowska 2010, 169-187.

13 See the use of the scale mountain of the Mesopotamian tradition in AE, 131-133.

4.15 and of lions in 4.25 and 4.30, the formality of the compositional device signifying a symbolic role. Rocky ground is the seat for a female deity as in 4.29, announcing her identity. The tree growing from rocky ground is clearly seen in 4.13, 4.14, 4.22 and 4.27. This is one of the most important symbols in Aegean art and will be discussed in the next Chapter where the whole image will be seen as a convincing shorthand for the fertile earth nourishing all plant life. Rocky ground concentrated as a single large, rounded boulder is a striking image. It may be shown as a single stone as in 4.22 or as two stones together, often with plants sprouting behind, as in the early form in 4.11 and as in 4.28 and 4.64. It is the focus of the kneeling the boulder ceremony as in 4.22. It is the appropriate seat for a female deity as in 4.3 and 4.29 and is one of the indicators of a cultscape. The boulder is like the earth condensed into one form and as such it becomes its ultimate symbol. From all the above examples it can readily be seen that depictions of rocky ground are not to be viewed simply as useful groundlines or convenient construction bases but rather as strategically placed symbols indicating the supporting and invigorating power of the earth.

Turning to the symbols of water, river and sea, we see that they, too, are amongst the earliest motifs. The spirals, meanders and wavy lines of the early seals as in 4.40 to 4.51 begin the representations of running streams, waves and water surfaces. Later they morph into the waveline and eventually also into the extended motifs, the wateredge and tricurved arch pattern of the later images, as in 4.52 to 4.69. All three motifs are features of both the landscape and seascape artistic concepts. With the landscape they locate animals and birds beside streams or marshes as in 4.52, 4.55 and 4.67 and also fantastic dragons as in 4.56 and 4.68. Deities have grand boats to travel across the shallow coastal sea as in 4.63 to 4.65 or else are carried over the water by birds as in 4.66 and 4.69. Sea creatures as in 4.58 and 4.59 sail or skim across the wave crests, and ordinary ships as in 4.61 and 4.62 sail by showing the waveline lapping at their hulls. With the seascape, the undersea world is conjured up for fish, octopus and dolphins to display as in 4.53, 4.54 and 4.60. In 4.48 a waveline surrounds the triton which is both a sea creature and a special object. However, we must ask if there is more to the ubiquitous presence of the waveline and its companion motifs, the wateredge and tricurved arch pattern, than simply a convenient shorthand for water. There is a clear parallel here with the rocky ground which supports but also nourishes plant and animate life and which provides a home for fantastic creatures and deities. Streams, marshes and the sea provide habitat and sustenance for their fauna and flora while the ship buoyed up by the power of the waves becomes a symbol of safe sailing¹⁴. Yet, the same watery abodes are realms where fantastic creatures and deities abide. The waveline is at once the representation of moving water and the statement of its power and thus becomes the water symbol *par excellence*.

Sky Symbols: sunburst, moon disk, moon crescent and skyline

The sun and moon of course are of immense importance, and it is not surprising that they are depicted from the time of the early seals as a sunburst and moon disk or moon crescent¹⁵. These three celestial signs are widely used in Mesopotamian iconography and evidenced in the cylinder seals created within that tradition. It is likely that these images, or their influence, transferred to the west but they did not come to be used as extensively in the Aegean¹⁶. Nor do the sky images come to enjoy a similar dominant presence to that of the earth images in the seal designs. Neither the sun nor the moon is a necessary component in scenes involving animals, human figures or human activities although there is a range of usages across all periods. The moon disk in the ship scenes of 4.74 and 4.75 are early examples suggesting the seafaring link, but stars do not seem to feature in spite of their usefulness as navigational aids. In Minoan High Art, in the complex scenes involving human figures, the sunburst is more in evidence and,

14 Consider also the extended meaning when a branch is added to the design. See Chapter 5 below.

15 Lucy Goodison pertinently argues that important Minoan buildings are aligned to celestial events like the mid-winter solstice, Goodison, POTNIA 77-88 and 2004, 339-350.

16 AE, 124-126.

to a lesser extent, the moon disk and crescent as in 4.90 to 4.93. In all these examples the protagonists do not seem to notice the celestial signs above.

The sunburst, moon disk and moon crescent are also placed above or beside human figures and exotic or fantastic creatures in a symbolic usage of contact with the supernatural world. The early sunburst with the seated female and lion in 4.73 and with the two hybrid women in 4.76 is paralleled by the moon crescent above the dragon in 4.77. Continuing through into Minoan High Art, the sunburst accompanies a sole female figure as in 4.87 and more dragons as in 4.88 and 4.89. What can this symbolic placement of celestial signs mean? As we have seen, the seals, with their need for economy of presentation, use an accompanying motif to identify the main subject or suggest their role of activity. With these symbols the featured female figures and all the fantastic creatures are being designated as other-worldly beings, deities and spirits. What then of the animals, whole or represented by the head, which also have a sunburst placed above or beside? The agrimi in 4.85 has been slain by the grand spear while the bull head in 4.86, like a bucrania, stands for the dead animal. The accompanying celestial sunburst suggests that they, too, after death may enter the spirit world.

There is one other set of images from the late Early Seal Period which involves sunbursts, moon disks and moon crescents where the images are used without reference to human, animal or fantastic figures. Their iconographic detail is the same as for the celestial signs identified by their placement in scenes involving animals and humans, and so these images must be seen as the same celestial signs. They are either sole subjects as in 4.79 to 4.84 or placed within hieroglyphic text as in 4.78, thus signifying their importance. Two seal designs are of particular interest. In both 4.82 and 4.83 there is a central pillar, one with two sunbursts, one on each side, and the other with two moon disks, one on each side together with four division lines. We can read the pillar as an astronomical sighting pole and the suns or moons each side as marking a calendar event. At first glance the duplication of the sunbursts makes one think of the equinox with equal day and night. However, for the sunbursts, it could be marking either the winter or the summer solstice with the sun approaching its furthest or its closest point and then returning. The two moon disks and division lines suggest the four phases from full moon to full moon. These early images provide additional evidence for the existence of a Minoan lunisolar calendar, as argued by Georgios Rethemiotakis through viewing images on gold signet rings¹⁷. The depiction of sun and moon symbols separately and their placement in the sky in cultscapes does indeed indicate a specific timing of these activities and ceremonies governed by the seasons. For the Minoans, as with all agricultural societies in temperate lands, knowledge of the timing of the winter solstice is vital. People must be sure that the sun is coming back to bring them warmth and to start the plant growth of spring. These peoples are also known to view the summer solstice as a time of celebration, looking forward to the harvests ahead. For the Minoans, as Mediterranean seafarers, watching the journeys of sun and moon across the sky is also of vital import as they time the opening of the sailing season and their return to harbour before the winter storms.

The skyline is an artistic construct debuted in the Minoan High Art Period. Since such wavy lines do not appear in the sky in real life, then the skyline is the creation of the seal artist to signify the importance of certain elements. The skyline subtends celestial signs as in 4.91 and 4.92 and a VIP appearing on high as in 3.55. In its hovering role as in 4.95 and 4.96 it rests around the heads of deities as a further indicator of their divine nature. This latter usage helps explain the curved or wavy lines springing out behind the genius of 4.98 and the griffin of 4.99. These are all skylines declaring the other-worldly nature of the fantastic creatures. In complex scenes the skyline is one of the main indicators of the cultscape as it hovers above the figures below as in 4.97 and 4.115. It is a powerful demarcation for the Minoans since, in both its subtending and its hovering roles, the skyline marks off the celestial sphere of the other world from the sphere of mortal life below.

¹⁷ Rethemiotakis 2016-2017, 14-29.

The Ceremony of Kneeling the Boulder (Plates 4.109 to 4.117)

The ceremony of kneeling the boulder has occasioned much discussion since the earliest depictions were found, as has the pulling the tree ceremony to be discussed in the next Chapter. Both ceremonies are considered quintessentially Minoan, and they are paired on two seals 4.111 and 4.113. Details of the kneeling the boulder ceremony are depicted on eight seal designs comprising five gold signets 4.109 to 4.113, one soft stone lentoid 4.114, one sealing from a metal signet 4.115 and one sealing from a soft stone signet 4.116. There may be a ninth example on the much-damaged sealing from the soft stone seal 4.117 where a large boulder shape with something on top is placed beside a gesturing woman, but the design is too fragmentary to make a sure identification. A female boulder kneeler is also shown in a fresco from Agia Triada¹⁸. The kneeling the boulder image does not continue in the iconographic repertoire beyond Minoan High Art.

The ceremony consists of a woman or a man kneeling at a large boulder, leaning their full weight down on their arm resting on it as in 4.109 to 4.116. The large boulder is the focus of the ceremony and is shown with the natural undulations and/or striations to be expected in a smoothed rocky surface. Where surroundings are depicted they indicate an outdoor setting for the ceremony, sometimes paving indicating a courtyard. Significantly, the surrounding detail indicates a cultscape with selections from the cultscape indicators of the tree growing from rocky ground, bees and beehives, birds and butterflies. The boulder kneeler may be a woman or a man, with the man dressed in usual male Minoan garb and the woman always wearing long pants¹⁹. The ceremonial act comprises the woman/man kneeling at the boulder, placing one arm bent across the top of the boulder to rest the weight of the upper body on the boulder while the other arm may be wrapped around the boulder or stretched out to acknowledge other humans in the scene or raised to greet birds or butterflies.

The boulder is the essence of the earth, both being the earth itself and being shaped by earth forces, smoothed in the water flow of streams. Its elemental character was so appreciated by the Minoans that they made it their most potent symbol of the earth. Yet is there another reason for its spectacular coverage and its symbolic focus in the kneeling the boulder ceremony? There are almost no examples of humans fully kneeling in Aegean art except for this boulder ceremony, and this is not the usual sort of veneration where the suppliant kneels before the sacred object, maybe with bowed head, perhaps venturing to touch it. This Minoan woman or man kneels in very close contact with the boulder, is even “draped over” the boulder and leans their full weight upon it. Are they trying to hold the boulder still? Perhaps they are. Is the boulder likely to move? Perhaps it may well do so. In this earthquake-prone land of Crete the earth may indeed move at any time and this ceremony is likely to be closely linked to the fear of seismic destruction. The earthquake has two seismic waves, the P-wave, or pressure wave, that arrives in advance of the S-wave, or secondary, shaking wave. Humans experience the S-wave as two motions, a swaying side-to-side movement and a vertical jolting movement which is much more serious. When the tremor begins, small stones rattle down the hillside to be followed by larger rocks and boulders as the quake strengthens. A ceremony where the human uses her/his weight to hold down the jolting sacred earth symbol and wraps her/his arms around it to stop the side-to-side movement may well be thought the appropriate act to stop the quake magnifying.

An added reference to imminent earthquake is the presence of birds or butterflies in five of the eight boulder kneeling scenes. Birds and butterflies are known motifs in the iconographic repertoire, significant enough to be given sole subject status and be seen as flying messengers. Here they are enlarged in relation to the human figures in order to show their importance. Animals have long been thought to sense earthquakes before humans and, in popular lore, birds and insects are often cited as giving warning. Scientific investigation of this phenomenon has not yet identified a definite predictive role for animals. However, the point here is not that scientific corroboration is lacking but that people have

18 Illustrated as a line drawing, AWP, Fig. 1.7.

19 See the discussion on clothing for females and males in Chapter 8 below.

taken anecdotal evidence to develop a popular lore of animal prediction. If the Minoans pre-dated the Greeks in believing that birds and insects did sense the impending earthquake then these seal images may well be testimony to that belief. Certainly, the boulder kneelers turn to acknowledge the bird and butterfly flying messengers and even welcome them by gesture. The Minoans were ever aware that the next earthquake could come at any time, and a ceremony where the human holds still the sacred earth symbol may well be thought to be their most important propitiatory act, a plea for help from the gods to avert annihilation. Boulders set up in public spaces would be able to provide a warning of impending seismic shock because their shape would cause them to tremble and eventually roll over. Moreover, their presence within shrine precincts would render them ever ready for the kneeling the boulder ceremony to be performed whenever an earth tremor began or at regular intervals to promote seismic calm. In the images, the human actors in the ceremony are alert and fully in control of their bodies. Yet, their very actions allow them to commune with deep earth forces, praying to the controlling deities to stop the destructive quakes which at any time might engulf their people. To the Minoans, the earth must have seemed alive, worthy of respect, even worship, and the need to control these overpowering forces of nature must have been in constant thought.

Comparisons with Images in Other Media

1. The patterning of the sea surface in Cycladic Art.
Clay object from Syros with incised decoration of a ship sailing across a sea surface of interlocking spirals.
NM, Plate 9.
2. Red lilies growing in a rocky landscape in the Spring Fresco from Acrotiri, Thera.
AP, Plate VII.
3. The extensive use of Peak Sanctuaries with their offerings.
Scenes on fragments of LM I relief rhytons.
AWP, 152, Figs. 9.6 and 9.7.
4. The sunburst on the prow of the Great Ship in the Thera Fresco.
NM, Plates 16 and 17.
5. The looping rocks in a glen composition in the Pylos Frescoes of Hunting Dogs and Bluebirds.
AP, Plates 80 and 81.

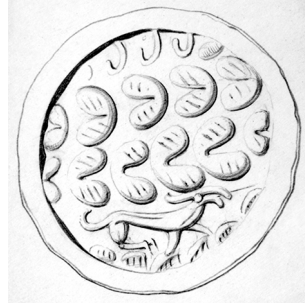
Plates 4.1 to 4.117

Land and Mountain

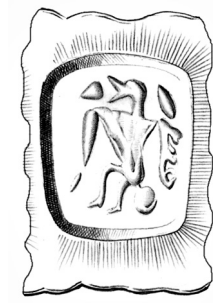
Land and Mountain – *Early Seal Period*



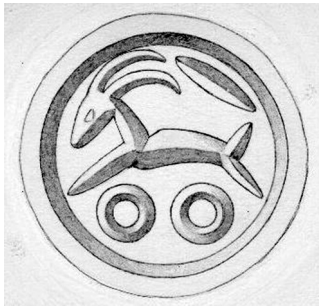
4.1 – hatched triangles as rocky ground
(II.1 126a/EM III-MM IA)



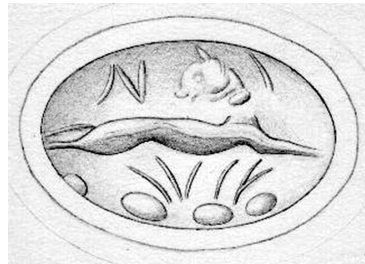
4.2 – hatching as rocky ground
(II.1 295a/EM III-MM IA)



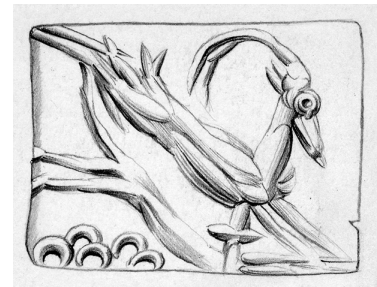
4.3 – boulder as seat
(I 416c/MM II)



4.4 – circles as rocky ground
(II.5 263/MM II)



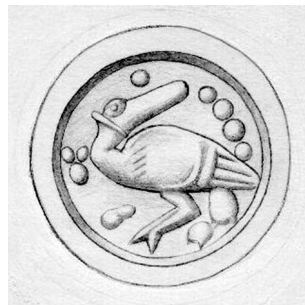
4.5 – oval rocks as rocky ground
(II.5 277/MM II)



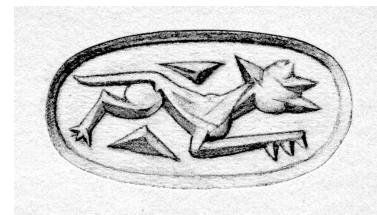
4.6 – scale pattern as rocky ground
(VII 35b/MM II-MM III)



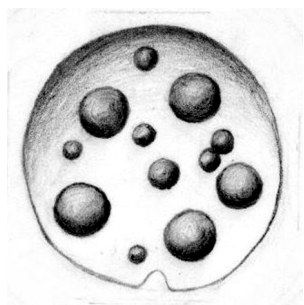
4.7 – rocky ground, glen
(II.6 220/MM I-MM II)



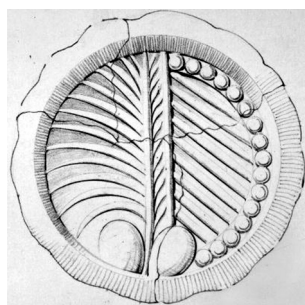
4.8 – rocky ground, glen
(II.5 308/MM II)



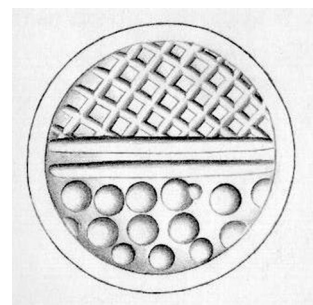
4.9 – rocky ground, glen
(II.2 87a/MM II)



4.10 – dot stones
(II.2 209/MM II)



4.11 – boulders with plants
(II.5 20/MM II)



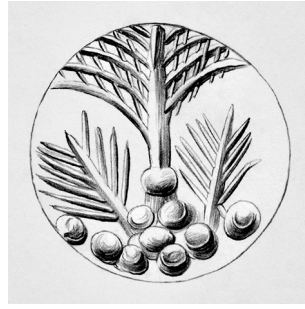
4.12 – stones, wickerwork
(II.5 19/MM II)

The Earth and Sky Surround

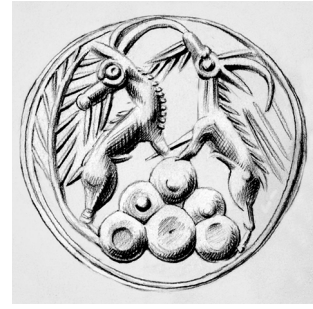
Land and Mountain – *Early Seal Period (cont.)*



4.13 – tree growing from rocky ground
(II.5 322/MM II)

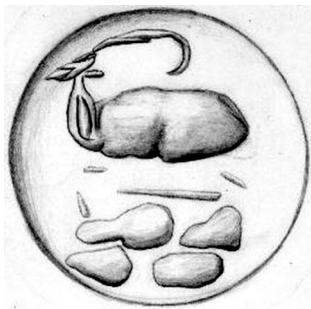


4.14 – tree growing from rocky ground
(VI 157/MM II-MM III)

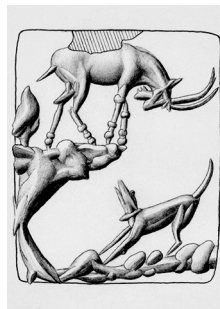


4.15 – rocky mountain
(VI 129/MM II)

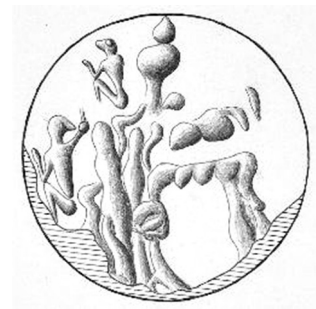
Land and Mountain – *Experimentation Period*



4.16 – rocky ground
(II.3 50/MM III)



4.17 – rocky ground
(VI 180/MM III-LM I)



4.18 – rocky ground
(II.8 286/MM III-LM I)

Land and Mountain – *Minoan High Art*



4.19 – rocky ground
(II.8 491/LM I)



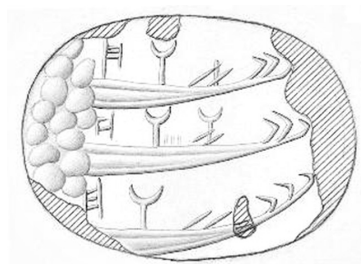
4.20 – rocky ground
(V 234/LM I)



4.21 – marbling
(II.8 298/LM I)



4.22 – boulder (detail of 4.109)



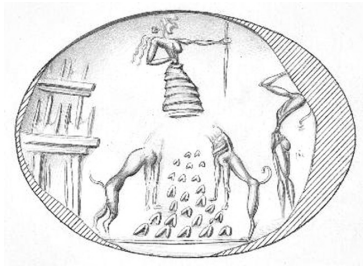
4.23 – rocky headland
(II.8 135/LM I)



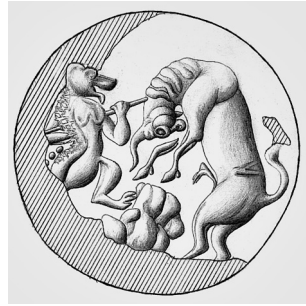
4.24 – glen
(II.8 268/LM I)

The Earth and Sky Surround

Land and Mountain – Minoan High Art (cont.)



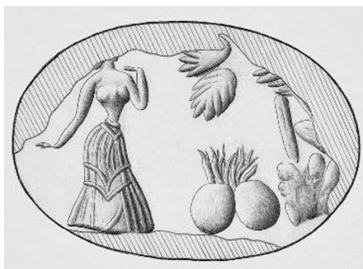
4.25 – rocky mountain
(II 8 256/LM I)



4.26 – rocky mountain
(II 7 31/LM I)



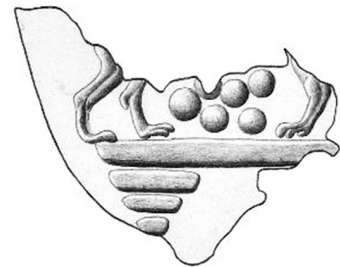
4.27 – rocky ground
(I 219/LM I)



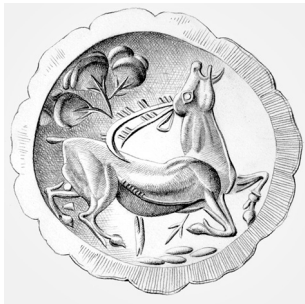
4.28 – shrine on rocky ground
(II 8 2/LM I)



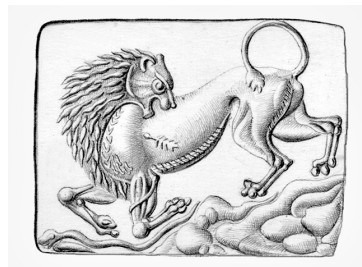
4.29 – rocky ground as seat
(II 8 239/LM I?)



4.30 – rocky mountain
(II.8 328/?)



4.31 – rocky ground
(I 242/LB I-LB II)

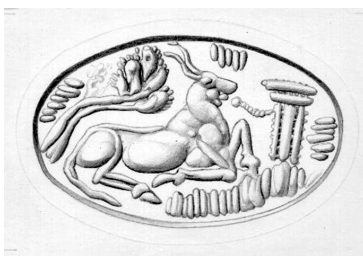


4.32 – marbling
(I 10/LH I)



4.33 – glen
(I 227/LB I-LB II)

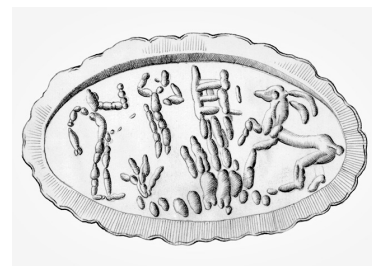
Land and Mountain – Legacy and Late Periods



4.34 – shrine on rocky ground, glen
(V 198/LM II-LB IIIA1)



4.35 – shrine on rocky ground
(VS 1B 115/LB II-LB IIIA1)



4.36 – shrine on rocky ground
(I 292/LB IIIA1?)

Land and Mountain – Legacy and Late Periods (cont.)



4.37 – rocky ground
(I 390/LB IIIA2-LB III)



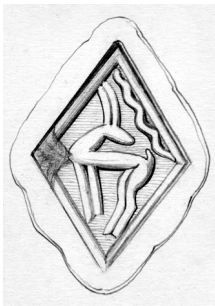
4.38 – rocks
(XI 203/LM IIIA1-LM IIIA2)



4.39 – rocks
(XI 271/LH IIIA2-LH IIIB)

Water, River and Sea

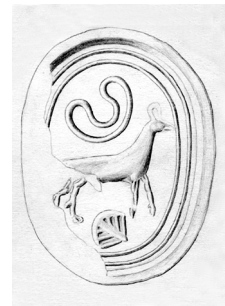
Water, River and Sea – Early Seal Period



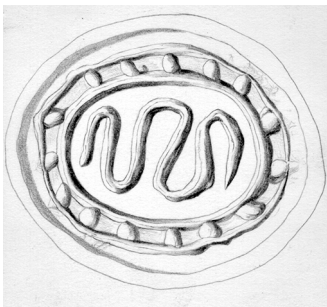
4.40 – waveline water
(II.1 98/EM III-MM IA)



4.41 – spiral water
(II.1 268a/EM III-MM IA)



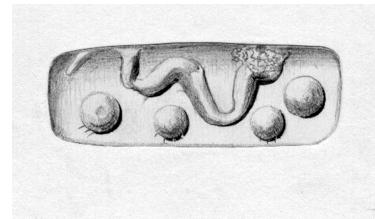
4.42 – meander water
(II.1 391a/EM III-MM IA)



4.43 – meander water
(IV 54/MM I)



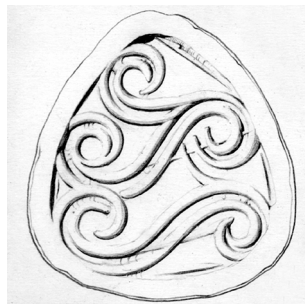
4.44 – meander water
(II.1 305a/EM III-MM IA)



4.45 – waveline water, stones
(II.2 270c/MM II)



4.46 – zigzag wavelines
(II.1 207/EM III-MM IA)



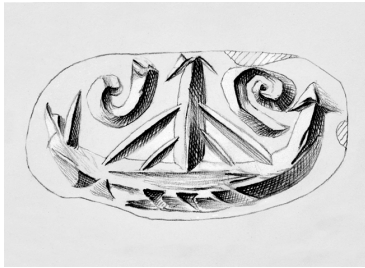
4.47 – S spiral water
(II.1 294/EM III-MM IA)



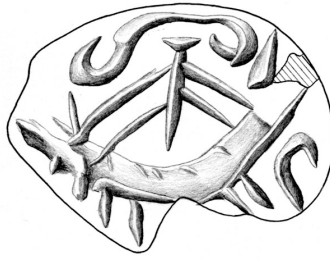
4.48 – waveline
(II.5 304/MM II)

The Earth and Sky Surround

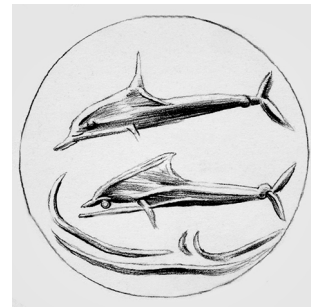
Water, River and Sea – *Early Seal Period (cont.)*



4.49 – spiral waves
(VI 74b/MM II)



4.50 – meanders as waves
(III 26/MM II)

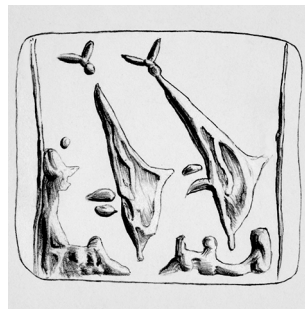


4.51 – waveline
(VI 156/MM II-MM III)

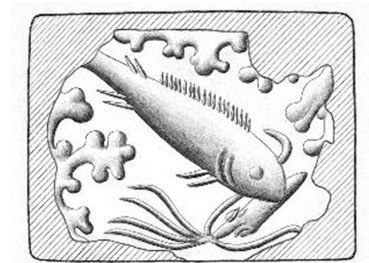
Water, River and Sea – *Experimentation Period*



4.52 – waveline
(II 8 376/MM III-LM I)

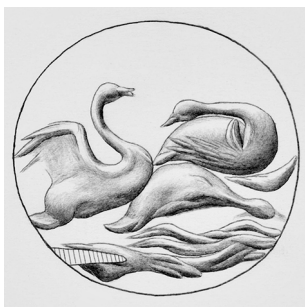


4.53 – wateredge
(VI 182/MM III-LM I)

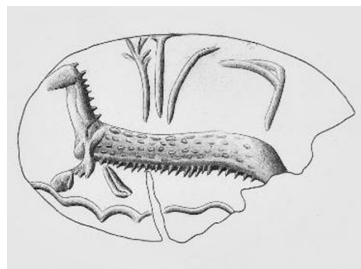


4.54 – wateredge
(II.8 157/MM III-LM I)

Water, River and Sea – *Minoan High Art*



4.55 – waveline
(VI 458/LM I)



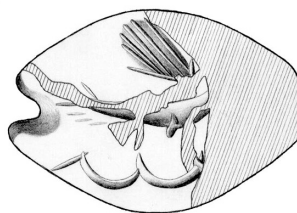
4.56 – waveline
(II.6 262/LM I)



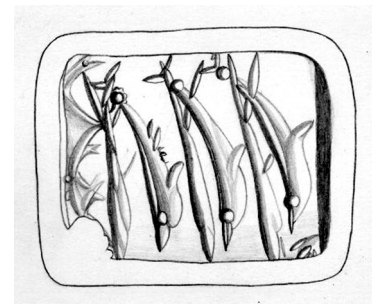
4.57 – waveline
(VS 1B 139/LB I-LB II)



4.58 – waveline
(II.3 91/LM I)



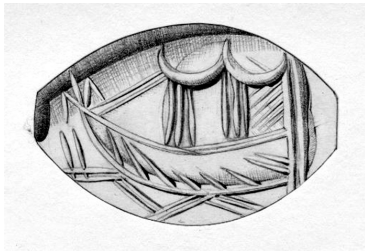
4.59 – waveline
(VS 1B 306/LM I)



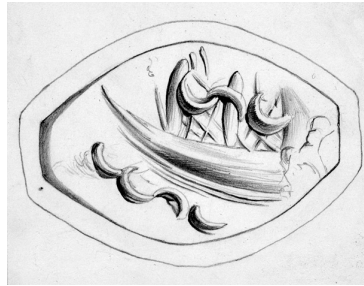
4.60 – seascape, wateredge
(IX 73/LM I)

The Earth and Sky Surround

Water, River and Sea – *Minoan High Art (cont.)*



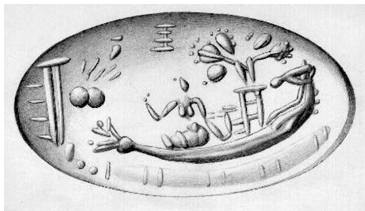
4.61 – waveline
(II.3 361/LM I)



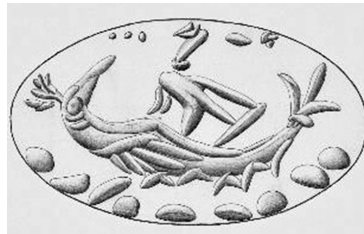
4.62 – waveline
(VII 101/LM I)



4.63 – tricurved arch pattern
(Minos Ring/LM I)



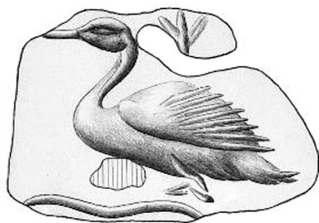
4.64 – wateredge
(II.3 252/LM I?)



4.65 – wateredge, waveline
(II.6 20/LM I)



4.66 – wateredge
(II.8 257/LM I)



4.67 – waveline
(II.8 167/LM I)

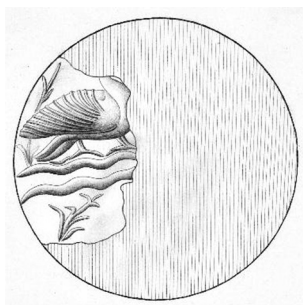


4.68 – waveline
(VI 362/LM I)

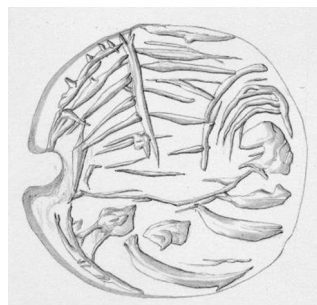


4.69 – wavelines
(VII 134/LB I-LB II)

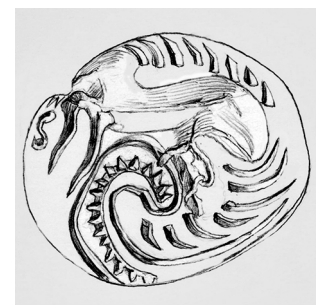
Water, River and Sea – *Legacy and Late Periods*



4.70 – wavelines
(II.8 171/LM II-LM IIIA1)



4.71 – wavelines?
(X 185/LH IIIA2-LH IIIB)



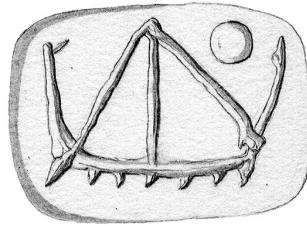
4.72 – wavelines?
(VI 478/LH IIIA2-LH IIIB)

Sky and Celestial Signs

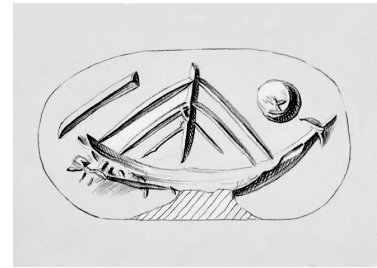
Sky and Celestial Signs – *Early Seal Period*



4.73 – sunburst
(II.1 55/EM III-MM IA)



4.74 – moon disk
(XIII 90a/MM II)



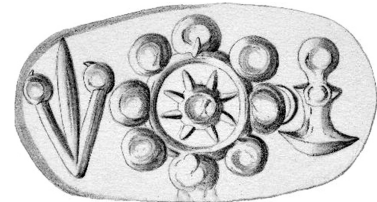
4.75 – moon disk
(VI 77a/MM II)



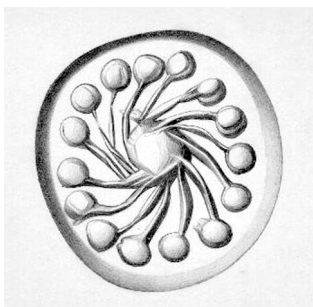
4.76 – sunburst
(VI 34a/MM II)



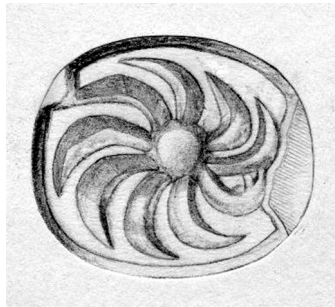
4.77 – moon crescent
(X 245a/MM II)



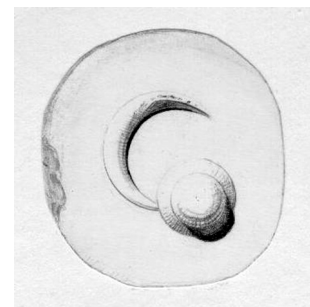
4.78 – sunburst
(XII 110b/MM II)



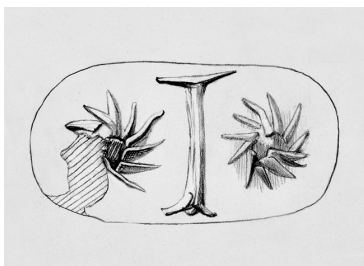
4.79 – whirl sunburst
(II.2 236a/MM II)



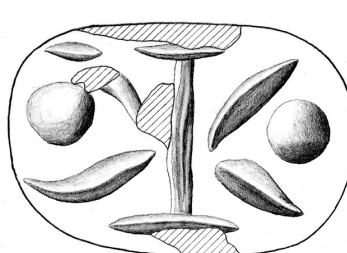
4.80 – whirl sunburst
(II.2 164b/MM II)



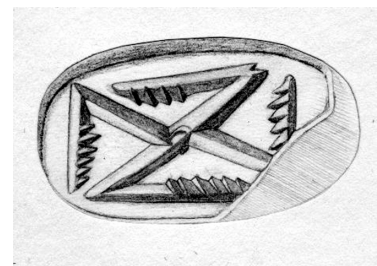
4.81 – moon crescent, star
(II.2 285c/MM II)



4.82 – pillar, whirl sunburst
(VI 86c/MM II)



4.83 – pillar, moon disks
(III 198c/MM II)



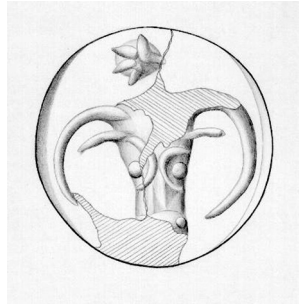
4.84 – swastika sunburst
(II.2 95a/MM II)

The Earth and Sky Surround

Sky and Celestial Signs – *Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art*



4.85 – agrimi, sunburst
(VII 42/MM III-LM I)



4.86 – bull head, sunburst
(II.3 149/LM I)



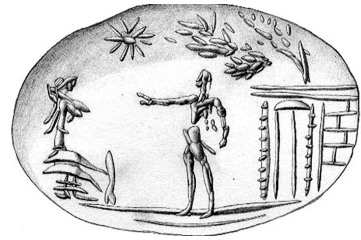
4.87 – Lady, sunburst
(III 351/LM I)



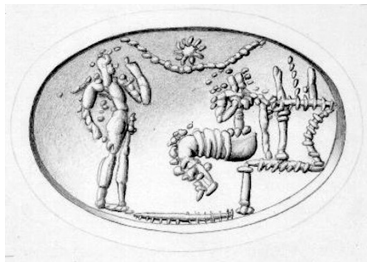
4.88 – dragon, sunbursts
(XII 290/LM I)



4.89 – dragon, sunbursts
(IV D42/LM I)



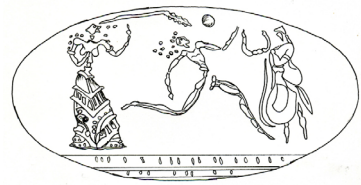
4.90 – sunburst
(XI 28/LM I)



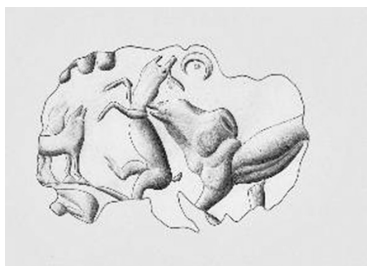
4.91 – sunburst, skyline
(V 199/LM I-LM II?)



4.92 – sunburst, moon crescent, skyline
(I 17/LB I-LB II)



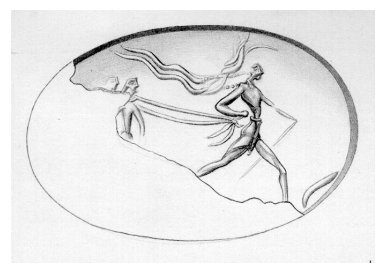
4.93 – moon disk
(Runner Ring/LM I)



4.94 – moon crescent, star
(II.6 96/LM I)



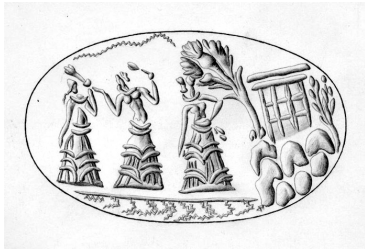
4.95 – skyline
(II.6 1/LM I)



4.96 – skyline
(VS 1A 133/LM I)

The Earth and Sky Surround

Sky and Celestial Signs – Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art (cont.)



4.97 – skyline
(VS 1B 114/LB I-LB II)



4.98 – skyline
(I 172/LB I-LB II)

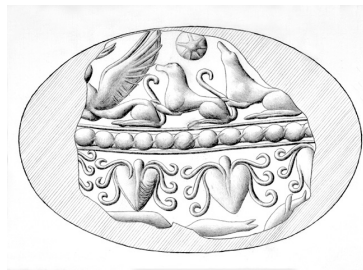


4.99 – skyline
(VS 3 64/LB I-LB II)

Sky and Celestial Signs – Legacy and Late Periods



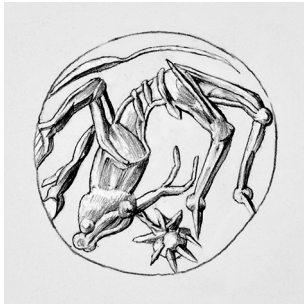
4.100 – sunburst, moon crescent, skyline
(I 179/LB II)



4.101 – sunburst
(I 329/LB II-LB IIIA1)



4.102 – sunbursts
(XI 38/LH II-LH IIIA1)



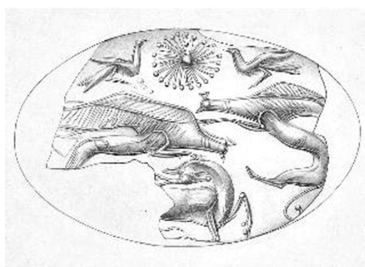
4.103 – sunburst
(VI 299/LM II-LM IIIA1)



4.104 – skyline
(I 129/LB II-LB IIIA1)



4.105 – skyline
(XI 112/LH II-LH IIIA1)



4.106 – sunburst
(II.8 192/LM IIIA1-LM IIIA2)



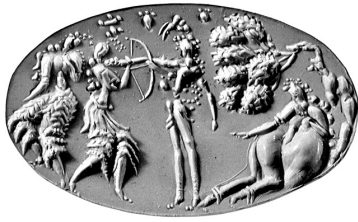
4.107 – sunburst
(II.8 326/LB IIIA1)



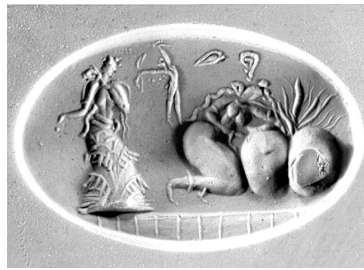
4.108 – sunburst
(X 186/LH IIIA2-LH IIIB)

Iconographic Interpretation: Sacred Surround

The Ceremony of Kneeling the Boulder



impression



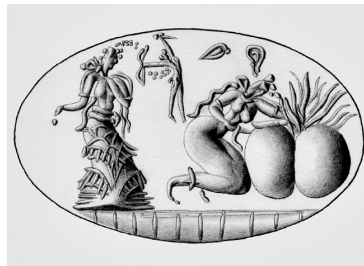
impression



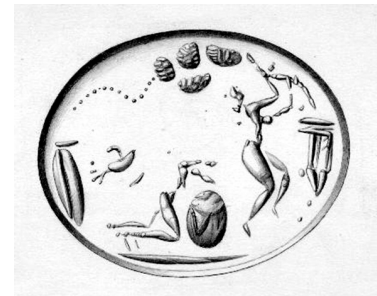
impression



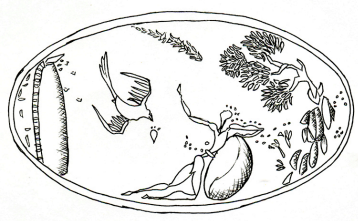
4.109 – woman boulder kneeler
(XI 29/LM I)



4.110 – woman boulder kneeler
(VI 278/LM I)



4.111 – man boulder kneeler, bird
(II.3 114/LM I)



4.112 – man boulder kneeler, bird
(Sellopoulou Ring/LM I)



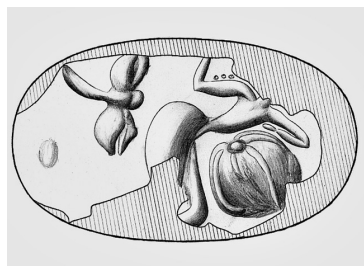
4.113 – man boulder kneeler, fluttering pair
(Archanes Cult Ring/LM I)



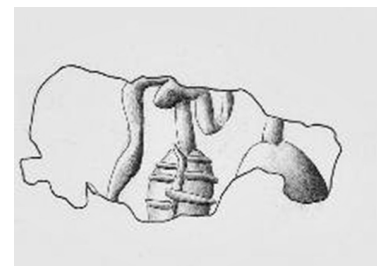
4.114 – woman boulder kneeler
(Kneeler Lentoid/LM I)



4.115 – woman boulder kneeler, fluttering pair (II.6 4/LM I)



4.116 – woman boulder kneeler, butterfly
(II.7 6/LM I)



4.117 – woman, boulder
(II.6 267/LM I)

Chapter 5 The Bounty of Nature

Flowers and plants are among the earliest images in the art and continue to be important. At first the seal designs show flora images as separate items but by Minoan High Art they have become full garden landscapes¹. Some images continue into the Legacy and Late Periods.

Flowers, Leaves and Branches

Flowers, Leaves and Branches – *Early Seal Period* (Plates 5.1 to 5.24)

In the Early Seal Period the designs fill the seal face with flora images. The names rosette, quatrefoil, lily, iris, crocus and papyrus are used here as art terms for the characteristic motifs. They are so useful because they encapsulate all the design possibilities of plan and profile flower shapes seen in Mediterranean nature². Flowers displayed in plan are the very early rosette as in 5.1 and the quatrefoil as in 5.2, the latter also allowing the possibility of forming an all-over design as in the quatrefoil flower pattern of 5.3. Then there are the flowers seen in elevation: the lily as in 5.4, the crocus as in 5.5 and the papyrus as in 5.6. The lily and crocus are characteristically shown with petals framing the central pistil florescence area of the flower. Sometimes the stamens are shown as here, sometimes not. The main difference is that the petals of the crocus regularly point up and the two outside petals of the lily regularly curve outwards and downwards. In some representations the lily petals curve sufficiently to form a volute while in other representations this distinction is blurred, and it is not certain which flower is meant. The iris is similar to the lily but the petals curve upwards. The lily is rarely shown at this early time³. The papyrus flower in 5.6 shows the fan shape with vertical elements rising up from the calyx and a curved cap above these, in this case the curve extending to volutes on each side.

The next five floral designs – triple bud, triple bud rod, petaloid, truncated petaloid and flower cross – differ from the images of flowers that we have just been discussing in that they are motif constructs rather than attempts at representations⁴. The triple bud is a three-pointed motif seen filling the interstices as in 5.7. Its inspiration may be the lily (or crocus) bud just beginning to open, with two petals peeling out, or it may be any bud or shoot pushing out from its protective calyx or leaf surround. Triple buds are much used as parts of larger floral designs. The angular treatment of triple buds and dot flowers or fruit in 5.9 creates a floral cross of a rather stylised form which is a regular motif in this period. In 5.10 the triple bud is placed centrally above the antithetical group of hybrid women while in 5.11 and 5.12

1 Search the IconAegean Database in the Element field on rosette, quatrefoil, lily, iris, crocus, papyrus, flower field, triple bud, triple bud rod, petaloid, truncated petaloid and flower cross, leaf, leaf band, double leaf band, branch, ivy leaf, palm tree, palm plant, palmette, palmette band and palmette pattern. Search in the *Icon* field on tree growing from rocky ground and pulling the tree.

Search the IconADict Database for the definition of each term or refer to IAS.

2 The delights of shape and colour in the flora of the American and Australian continents were yet far away from European consciousness.

3 It seems to be represented more as a geometric pattern. Compare CMS II.2 142 and CMS II.5 181, and see the discussion on geometry and natural shapes in Chapter 3 above.

4 The triple bud resembles the *fleur de lys motif*, but anachronistic terms are not used in the IconAegean Classification. The petaloid is also known as the petaloid loop.

it is placed beside sole subject male and female figures as identification. Then it has a long stem added to become the triple bud rod as in 5.13 and 5.14. In 5.15 two triple buds rather like lilies spring out each side from an S spiral in a much-used combination, this time to accompany hieroglyphic text. As already explained, the petaloid is a perfect geometric shape, half an ellipse. Its design effect is both floral and foliate. The looping shape, as in 5.7, may be either a rounded petal or rounded leaf, and the curling stem suggests its attachment to the flower or plant. It is a favourite motif used regularly as the base for a design to which other flora or spiraliform components can be added. The truncated petaloid, as in 5.8, where the loop is cut across and replaced by (usually) 3 prongs, is also regularly used in the early seals.

Turning to the foliate designs, we see leaves and branches in profusion from the earliest times, termed leaf, leaf band, double leaf band and branch. Even with the smallest motif, the leaf, the variety is astonishing. In 5.21 the lanceolate leaf is shown, in 5.18 the rounded leaf and in 5.16 the double leaf. Internal details may be added to reflect the central rib and veins of the leaf as in 5.18, 5.19 and 5.21. The leaf may be repeated to form a leaf band as in 5.18, a double leaf band as in 5.17 and a spiral leaf band as in 5.21. Luxuriant foliage is also suggested by the repetition of leaf forms surrounding the fantastic creature in 5.20. The branch, as a separate form detached from the tree, is found somewhat later. It is placed beside animals as with the agrimi in 5.22 and the bird in 5.23. As allusion to human activity comes with its placement beside a sailing ship as in 5.24.

The hieroglyphic signs CHIC 023 to 032 are listed as being sourced in floral and foliate images⁵. Sign 023 appears to be the crocus flower while signs 025 to 030 are various types of branches.

Flowers, Leaves and Branches – Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art (Plates 5.25 to 5.48)

At first the motif usage of the earlier period is continued. The rosette and papyrus design of 5.25 shows the same tight design and the use of fill in the interstices. Yet there are also significant changes. The papyrus flower plants of 5.26 are shown apparently growing naturally in a clump⁶ but they are not entirely naturalistic. There is careful arrangement of the details of stem, dotted floret and leafy sections, revealing that the old delight in patterning persists. This patterning is also seen in the arrangement of the flower plants surrounding the tumblers in 5.27 so that a balance in the total design is achieved. The agrimi with the crocus in 5.28 echoes the earlier animal with branch compositions although we should note that the crocus is increased in size in proportion to the animal and so is enhanced in importance⁷. Then in 5.29 the birds in a papyrus thicket are presented in the new naturalistic view. Even fantastic creatures are given papyrus landscapes in which to prance and hunt as in 5.37 to 5.39. Flower depictions accompany humans in their activities. In 5.30 a hand holds the papyrus-lily, which is a composite flower created when the papyrus floret is inserted into the two volute lily petals⁸. In 5.33 women carry long stalks of flowering lily and papyrus. In the cultscapes of 5.31 and 5.32 a flower field surrounds the women beholding the epiphany and two women servers approach a shrine holding open lily flowers. In the cultscape in 5.34, the triple bud is placed like a hovering symbol over a scene where a deity who holds a triple bud rod leads two women away. A crocus is placed in the significant position behind the female figure in 5.35 to identify her. In 5.36 the female figure holds a papyrus and also has one placed behind her in identification. The iris, with its incurving petals differentiating it from the lily, is rarely seen in seal design. Then there are the cases where flower motifs are used in antithetical group compositions. The tree of life as the central focus takes the form of a stylised papyrus plant in 5.40, a stylised tree topped by a rosette or sunburst in 5.41 and a triple bud rod in 5.42. Fantastic creatures, the griffin and the genius, are attendants at the tree. In 5.42 the triple bud rod is further embellished by positioning it on a curved

⁵ CHIC, 16-18.

⁶ Olga Krzyszkowska, AS, 126-127 Fig. no. 212 with note 27, advises that the MM III-LM I dating indicated in the CMS is too late.

⁷ The increased size of the crocus underscores its importance, and its placement beside the agrimi suggests a fertilisation link through adding ground horns to the soil.

⁸ This is Evans' "wazlily".

altar and having a Mistress figure placed on top. In 5.43 the papyrus lily is the sole subject. The rosette and the papyrus form part of the fantastic assemblages of the Zakros compositions as in 5.44 and 5.45. Examples from the talismanic repertoire⁹ show papyrus, lily, leaf and branch motifs as in 5.46 to 5.48. The ivy leaf as in 5.47 is a new shape in the repertoire of leaf motifs. Placing the papyrus lily centrally within double horns as in 5.48 adds importance, and here the branches coalesce with the upright horns.

Flowers, Leaves and Branches – *Legacy and Late Periods* (Plates 5.49 to 5.57)

Some floral usages continue into the Legacy Period but they are not usually rendered with naturalism. A bull is tethered to a flowering plant in 5.49 and tumblers in acrobatic pose are paired about papyrus plants in 5.50. Even more formal compositions are seen with animals posed heraldically. In 5.51 a bull and a ram flank triple bud rods. Bulls, sphinxes and rams are seen as attendants to a tree of life in 5.52 to 5.54. In each case the tree incorporates a stylised flora element – leaves in 5.52, a triple bud rod in 5.53 and a papyrus in 5.54. The last vestiges of the floral/foliate display are found in the Late Period in the schematic branches placed beside human figures and animals as in 5.55 to 5.57.

Plants and Trees

Plants and Trees – *Early Seal Period* (Plates 5.58 to 5.60)

In the Early Seals there are few plants and trees growing up from the ground since the flora repertoire is mostly represented by individual flower, leaf and branch motifs, as discussed above. The vegetation surrounding the agrimi in 5.58 may be branches but, because of their vertical orientation and their source in the ground, they can be viewed as trees. In 5.59 we see the more familiar leaves but some are used in the position of the tree canopy. In 5.60, a slender tree grows up behind the seated figure which it shades with its over-arching branch.

Plants and Trees – *Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art* (Plates 5.61 to 5.78)

The combination of fauna with vegetation is widely used now as animal with plant or tree. The bull, the boar and the exotic lion are seen in 5.61 to 5.63, posed standing or resting in a stage composition. A somewhat more naturalistic landscape handling presents agrimi, hound and bird in action poses in 5.64 to 5.66.

Scenes with human figures are predominantly cultscapes as in 5.67 to 5.73 and 5.121 to 5.129. The tree growing from rocky ground is seen in 5.67 where it is placed centrally in the design to draw attention to its importance and in 5.127 where it is the focus of the pulling the tree ceremony. The tree grows out of a shrine, as with the tiered tree shrine in 5.68 and 5.122, the ashlar tree shrine in 5.69, 5.70, 5.123 and 5.124 and the lattice tree shrine in 5.126¹⁰. In 5.72 a female deity is identified by the grand boat and the tiered tree shrine behind her. The ceremony of kneeling the boulder, discussed in Chapter 4, shows in 5.73 the variant of the double boulder with plants, also seen in reduced size beside the shrines in 5.71 and 5.72. The plants growing up behind the boulders are always of a particular kind with strappy long pointed leaves¹¹. In the cultscapes of 5.121 to 5.128 the ceremony of pulling the tree is graphically shown with both the woman and the man as tree puller. Other foliate examples include the tree behind a deity accompanied by a sunburst as in 5.74 and the genius figures holding ewers over plants as in 5.75. Here the antithetical group places the creatures as attendants to a tree of life in the

9 The talismanic analysis by Artemis Onassoglou, CMS B2, lists various floral and foliate motifs. The *Spross-Motiv*, 35-44, XIV-XVII, is covered here by plant and branch, although it is of note that most examples of the sprouts are with three shoots, thus indicating the triple bud. The *Herzform-Motiv*, 44-48, XVIII-XIX, is here the ivy leaf. The *Papyrus-Motiv (Löwenmaske)*, 48-56, XX-XXa, is identified here as the palm tree, including some of its stylised forms. The *Rosetten-Motiv*, 117-119, XLIV, is here the rosette.

10 See the discussion on shrines in Chapter 8 below.

11 Warren 1984a, 17-24, sees the boulders and plants as squills.

form of three plants sprouting from double horns placed upon a curved altar. A group of talismanic seals presents the ewer and the vase flanked by plants or branches as in 5.76 and 5.77 while in others the plant springs up from double horns beside a bee smoker as in 5.78.

Plants and Trees – *Legacy and Late Periods* (Plates 5.79 to 5.84)

The animal plus plant/tree motif remains a favourite in the Legacy Period. The agrimi and the bull are the usual animals as in 5.79 to 5.81, and stationary poses in the stage composition are the norm. Sometimes the tree is given a flat base as in 5.79 and 5.81, making it look artificial. Fantastic creatures and deities are placed with trees as in 5.82. In 5.83 and 5.84 agrimia are attendants at a tree of life. In the Late Period trees and plants are not carefully articulated, rather being part of the schematic vegetation noted in the description of branches in 5.55 to 5.57 above.

Palmettes, Palm Plants and Palm Trees

Palmettes, Palm Plants and Palm Trees – *Early Seal Period* (Plates 5.85 to 5.96)

Differentiated from all the above foliage forms is the family of palms. The fan-shaped leaf with central rib from which veins spring out is called a palmette. It is seen as a separate motif in 5.85 and 5.86, in a line as a band in 5.87 and 5.88 and repeated as an all-over pattern in 5.89. The palmette settles deeply into the iconography of the early designs. It partners with flower/foliate motifs like the quatrefoil, rosette and petaloid in 5.86 and 5.87. It plays with translatory and dilatory symmetry in 5.90. It nestles into spiraliform designs as in 5.91 to 5.93. It surrounds the exotic lion in 5.94. The tree in 5.60 may be the earliest palm tree, but with only one curving frond its identification is difficult. Certainly, the palm tree is clearly seen in 5.95 in one of the earliest depictions of the tree growing from rocky ground motif, and it already has palm plants shooting out from its base, a detail that continues in the motif. Palmettes frame the hieroglyphic text in 5.96.

Palmettes, Palm Plants and Palm Trees – *Minoan High Art* (Plates 5.97 to 5.108)

The palm tree as sole subject is seen in 5.97 as a tree growing from rocky ground with additional palm fronds growing out of the base. As part of a landscape, the palm tree in 5.98 does seem to be an edible date palm with the small-sized fruit carefully depicted. Significantly, a lion is also shown. The hunter in 5.99 aims his spear in a landscape containing a palm plant. Examples from the talismanic repertoire, 5.100 to 5.102, show that the motifs, so well-known from the early seals, are now given stylised renderings. The palmette of earlier times turns into a tree which grows from a smooth ground mound. The palm plants springing from the base are linearised, and in some examples the flowering/fruited pendants are shown as round or oval shapes¹².

Fantastic creatures find a natural home where the palm tree and the palm plant grow, as with the dragon in 5.103 and the griffin in 5.104. The cultscapes of 5.105 to 5.108 stress the importance of the palm tree and palm plant. A woman server places a plant on the altar with double horns in 5.105, and at her back is a palm plant growing from rocky ground. In 5.106 a female deity accompanied by two servers stands before a tree shrine given extra import by the placement of a palm plant in front. In both 5.107 and 5.108 the palm tree is placed in a significant position. In 5.107 it stands before a lattice shrine in the grand boat, and a female deity acknowledges it with gesture. In 5.108 it identifies the female deity seated before it.

Palmettes, Palm Plants and Palm Trees – *Legacy and Late Periods* (Plates 5.109 to 5.120)

The animal with palm combination continues as in 5.109 to 5.111 with the palm tree and bulls and lions and as in 5.113 and 5.114 with the palm plant and boars and lion. For the palm tree, the natural

¹² This linearisation and its effect were discussed under Brief Experiments in Chapter 3 above.

look of 5.109 disappears and stylised variations become the norm as shown in 5.110, 5.111 and 5.115 to 5.120. This stylised palm tree has a single slender trunk which springs from a base knob with shoots emerging each side. The trunk is often horizontally ribbed and the canopy consists of a central spike(s) or triple bud while branches and/or inflorescence curve down each side. An attempt at placing the palm trees in a landscape is seen in the chariot scene of 5.82 and the animal attack/suckling scene of 5.112. However, increasingly the palm trees are seen in symbolic compositions. They are placed with animals like the bulls in 5.116 and the antithetical groups of 5.117 and 5.118. They appear in cultscapes like the sacrifice scene in 5.115, the serving at the altar scene of 5.119 and the deity gesturing in 5.120. By the Late Period there are few designs that can be seen clearly as palms but there are schematised shapes that may be trees as in 5.55 to 5.57.

Iconographic Interpretation: Two Beautiful Gardens

Interpretation of the lush plant images created by the Minoans follows. For the Mycenaeans, their plant iconography, including the Mycenaean palm, is discussed below in Chapter 14.

It is as if the Minoans, for the first thousand years of their artistic life, carry a garden around with them on their seals and after that they are never quite able to leave it. When we first meet the seals in the Early Seal Period the proliferation of floral and foliate designs is striking. All the flower shapes are there very early, seen in plan or in elevation: the rosette, quatrefoil, papyrus, lily, iris, crocus and triple bud. Various patterns are made from these flower shapes, both band and all-over patterns like the rosette band, flower cross and quatrefoil flower pattern. Foliate shapes are there, too, individually or cumulatively: leaf (rounded or lanceolate), petaloid, double leaf, branch, plant and palmette. Then, just as with the flowers, the leaves and plants are made into band and all-over patterns like the leaf band, double leaf band, palmette band and palmette pattern. As we move into Minoan High Art these individual floral and foliate motifs are lost to the seal repertoire, and seal artists construct developed landscapes and cultscapes which frame the activities of animals and humans¹³. The flower field and the papyrus marsh are notable here. The pairing of animal with branch or tree/plant remains a favourite subject. The tree growing from rocky ground becomes a significant symbol at this time while the triple bud continues in use. The bounty of nature inspires seal artists to create floral and foliate symbols which are among the most potent and the most lasting of Minoan images.

Now, is it possible to identify within the Aegean florilegium the actual flowers, plants and trees that inspire the artistic motifs we have been examining¹⁴? The rosette is ever important and, since it can have 5 to 12 or more petals, it may represent any number of flowers. With 6 or 8 petals, it may be showing the open flower faces of Cretan wildflowers like those of the ranunculus, anemone or cistus families. With 5 petals it may be the ever-so-useful flax plant. The quatrefoil may represent simpler flowers with 4 petals like the rare Cretan clematis which spreads its tiny white flowers out from cracks in the rocks¹⁵. More likely it is the olive flower since the olive, with its sustaining food and oil, is a vital part of the agricultural produce for the people. The iris in art, rarely shown, may well be the iris flower. The lily and crocus may, between them, represent the flowers sprouting from bulbs like the crocus, tulip, lily and sea daffodil

13 The earlier floral and foliate motifs do not disappear from art. They take their place as jewellery designs, in metalwork, on ivory carvings and as borders to the frescoes. See the discussions in Chapters 13 and 14 below.

14 Endemic plants that may be the source of the artistic motifs include: *Iris unguicularis* ssp *cretensis*, *Ranunculus cupreus*, *Crocus sieberi* ssp *sieberi* (Siebers crocus is the only spring flowering crocus on Crete), *Crocus oreocreticus*/Cretan crocus, *Crocus sativus* (the autumn flowering saffron crocus), *Lilium candidum*, *Cistus creticus*, *Tulipa cretica*, *Pancratium maritimum* (spectacularly flowering in late summer), *Anemone hortensis* ssp *Heldreichii*, *Cyclamen creticum*, *Capparis spinosa*, *Helichrysum stoechas*, *Origanum dictamnus*, *Phoenix theophrasti* and *Olea Europa* ssp *oleaster*. Note also the flowers of the flax plant, *Linum usitatissimum*.

15 Perhaps not so rare in Bronze Age times, the Clematis elisabethae-carolae is now found in the White Mountains, nestling in craggy clefts.

families. The Minoans grew the crocus and no doubt valued saffron, its dried stigma, as a culinary ingredient and a yellow dye. The crocus and its saffron deserve special mention because of its medicinal properties, known in the ancient world and being researched further today. Some of the early fan-shaped florets filling interstices may be inspired by the thistle, the caper or flowers of the aster family. The palm and palmette may be sourced in the Theophrastus Date Palm which is endemic to Crete. Perhaps the distinct yellow/orange colour of the large inflorescence of the Cretan palm recommended its inclusion in the floral repertoire. The detail of leaf types is impressive and indicates close attention to the different plants and no doubt to their uses. The tiny leaves may represent the favourite herbs. The paired leaves of the leaf band may be sprigs of thyme or oregano while the larger rounded leaves may belong to Cretan dittany. The motif name ivy probably covers the creeping ivy but the inspiration for the design may be not a leaf at all but the heart-shaped seed pod of the silphium plant, now extinct¹⁶. The plants with long strappy leaves rising behind boulders are likely to be squills¹⁷ whose strong growth comes as winter moves to early spring. The careful rendition of shape in all these flower and leaf images provides evidence of different endemic plant types, suggesting not only food sources but also herbal and medicinal usages and the changing seasons. The many micro-climates of Crete which helped promote the varied florilegium and many unique endemic species of Crete have long been recognised as very special¹⁸. The Minoan artists were certainly appreciative, recording plant beauty in exquisite detail as shape which, in the seals, must do duty to suggest colour, texture and perfume. These representations provide an expansive picture of the bounty of nature to be enjoyed by the peoples of Crete from the earliest times. This is the Minoan endemic garden which we may name after its favourite flower, the Lily Garden.

However, the terms papyrus, palm and palmette may well indicate exotic flora, particularly when there are so many links with Egypt discernible in the Early Seal Period in Crete¹⁹. For the papyrus there is a strong case to be made that it is indeed the Egyptian papyrus, famous in the ancient world both as the extensive papyrus thickets of the Nile marshes and the beautiful depictions in Egyptian art²⁰. The palm and palmette may be recording the eastern domesticated date palm, so useful as a food source and distinctive marker of watered fertile oases²¹. The papyrus and palmette motifs are well-established in the iconographic repertoire by the end of the Early Seal Period where the papyrus flower stem is already sprouting lanceolate leaves as in 1.66. Adding leaves to the papyrus stem may be in imitation of the endemic reeds or as a parallel to the lily flower stem, or both. Clearly, the bare triangular stem of the Egyptian papyrus has been Aegeanised. In Minoan High Art, the papyrus plant creates a special marshy landscape where waterfowl swim as in 5.29. The many depictions of water birds and a marshy landscape suggest that Crete enjoyed a wetter climate in the Bronze Age than today²². However, in Minoan High Art, the main role of the palm tree, palm plant and papyrus flower is to designate a fantasy landscape where deities, dragons and griffins abide as in 5.37, 5.39, 5.103, 5.104 and 5.106 to 5.108. Sourced in exotica, this is the Minoan supernatural garden, which we may name after its favourite flower, the Papyrus Garden.

Yet for all the delightful floral and foliate life depicted in both these Gardens, the aim is not simply to display each flower, leaf, branch, plant and tree. The Minoan artist also seeks to present the deep

16 Products of the silphium plant, used for food and medicine, were highly sought in the Greek and Roman world. It is thought to be a type of large fennel plant, possibly with yellow leaves and flowers. The image of the silphium plant and its seed are found on the later coinage of Cyrenaica.

17 Sea squills, *Urginia/Charybdis/Drimia maritima*, have a large bulb, sprout long leathery dark leaves in spring which die back and then produce a tall raceme of white flowers in autumn.

18 Baumann 1993 gives an overview of the wildflowers and plant lore, noting the prevalence of micro-climates.

19 Links may be earlier. See AE, 71-83, and the discussion on exotic and fantastic arrivals in Chapter 10 below.

20 *Cyperus papyrus*. See the MAST Seminar 2021 and Crowley ZOIA, 208-210.

21 The domesticated date palm, *Phoenix dactylifera*.

22 Vlacopoulos and Zorzos, PHYSIS, 183-196.

geometric structuring of each living element, thus revealing their ability to peer into the natural world and see its deep patterning²³.

Plant Symbols: tree growing from rocky ground, triple bud, rosette, lily and papyrus

For the tree growing from rocky ground, it is crucial to see beyond a simple assessment of a stage setting for human activity. The tree growing from rocky ground is an *Icon* in its own right, occupying central place or either side of the bezel curve in complex compositions as in 5.67, 5.127 and 5.128. Arthur Evans recognised its importance in his early writing where he saw both the tree and the pillar as the focus of worship²⁴. However, the tree is only half of the image. The tree has to be rooted in the nurturing soil which, as we have seen in Crete, comes naturally in the form of rocky ground. The tree is shown in various forms as in 5.67 to 5.72, 5.121 to 5.124 and 5.126 to 5.128. Even when the tree grows out of a tree shrine it is rooted in the rocky ground as in 5.121 and 5.126. It is one of the main indicators of a cultscape. It is the focus of the important tree pulling ceremony discussed below. Yet it is also a reflection of the slopes of the rocky mountains we met in Chapter 4. The tree growing from rocky ground is the vibrant symbol that encapsulates in one image the great forests clothing the Cretan mountains which surround the Minoans in their daily life.

The triple bud is one of the most striking of the endemic green symbols, and in it we see further testament to the importance of enveloping greenery. The triple bud and its extended form, the triple bud rod, continue from the Early Seal Period through into Minoan High Art. The triple bud may be the lily or crocus bud or the first shoot sprouting from a seed. As any, or all of these, it becomes a symbol of the bursting energy of every plant as it grows to the light. Of prolific use in the designs of the early seals, it is overtaken by more naturalistic floral displays in Minoan High Art but its symbolic use continues. In the antithetical group composition of 5.42, the triple bud rod is the central motif associated with other important symbols, the curved altar and the Mistress with horn bow hat, all three together being the focus of the attendant griffins. Its importance is underscored by naming the VIP who holds it the Triple Bud Rod Lord as in 5.34.

Now we turn to the flower symbols of the rosette, the lily and the papyrus. The rosette has a strong presence in the early seals although it is eclipsed by other flowers in the later more naturalistic depictions. The lily is the endemic flower shown in profile with loving detail of volute petals and upright stamens as in 5.4/1.36 and 1.25. Its shape helps create the triple bud symbol. By Minoan High Art it takes a more naturalistic form, being shown as opening bud and fully open flower in 5.32 and as fully open flower on its stem with lanceolate leaves in 5.33. Its strong presence in the iconographic repertoire²⁵ makes it the symbol of the endemic garden. Papyrus images begin as the individual flower head motifs favoured in the early seals. In the Phaistos Sealings it is shown growing in a landscape as in 1.66, and by Minoan High Art its long stem has gathered lanceolate leaves as with the lily, seen in 5.26 and 5.33, or reeds. It is used symbolically to identify a deity as in 5.36 or as a tree of life as in 5.40. It is the abode of exotic and fantastic creatures as in 5.37 to 5.39. Now, the other plant with exotic links, the palm, enters the iconographic repertoire as the palmette pattern of the early seals and becomes the full-grown tree in Minoan High Art where it partakes in the symbolic role of the tree, as discussed above. In 5.106, as a palm plant, it grows before a tree shrine, in 5.107 it grows before a shrine in the grand boat, in 5.108 it marks the seat of a Seated Lady, and in 5.97 it is a special case of the tree growing from rocky ground. The palm has important roles to play but it still seems that the papyrus is the signature plant of the supernatural garden. The two floral symbols, lily and papyrus, are paired as the artist displays in 5.33. This pairing immediately, in the most succinct way, reminds us of the two gardens: the endemic garden of the real world inhabited by the Minoans, the Lily Garden; and the supernatural world of their beliefs

23 As discussed in the section Beautiful Geometry and Natural Shapes in Chapter 3 above.

24 Evans 1901, 99-204.

25 See Aphordhakos and Warren 2011, 271-284, on the lily in botany and iconography.

where exotic and fantastic creatures play in the company of deities, the Papyrus Garden. Is this endemic-supernatural pairing the meaning behind their fusion into the papyrus lily flower as in 5.30? Although it does not enjoy a wide coverage in the seals, the papyrus lily is beloved of the decorative designs in jewellery and in fresco borders. Even as the floral and foliate symbols transform they are potent to the end.

The Ceremony of Pulling the Tree (Plates 5.121 to 5.129)

The tree is the focus of the pulling the tree ceremony, whether it is depicted as the tree growing from rocky ground or as the tree growing from within a shrine. The tree is as much a protagonist in the ceremony as the woman or man. The nine seal examples comprise seven gold signets, 5.121 to 5.124 and 5.127 to 5.129, one sealing from a metal signet 5.125 and one soft stone lentoid 5.126. Seven of the examples, 5.121 to 5.127, belong to the Minoan High Art Period and are discussed here. The signet 5.128 is an exceptional example and is treated fully in Chapter 14 along with the signet 5.129.

The ceremony of pulling the tree consists of the human stepping up to the tree, raising one or both their arms to grasp the trunk or bough and pulling it towards their body so that the tree canopy overshadows them. The ceremony presents a striking image which the artist has captured in a compelling cultscape *Icon*. Tree pulling takes place in the open air with the cultscape indicators, apart from the tree, being one or more of the *Icons*, beehive with bees, hovering symbol or celestial sign. The beehive is the pithos-shaped item occupying the left curve of the bezel as in 5.121 and 5.127 and in all beehive representations. The bees are shown as dots around the beehive and even flying in a line to the tree canopy as in 5.121. The tree canopy is regularly shown as heavy foliage with a variety of surface textures, often raised dots or fringe dots. The exaggeration of these details draws attention to their importance and so, in conjunction with the beehive and bees, they can plausibly be read as flowers and more bees. In 5.123 and 5.124 a female epiphany figure is seen. The hovering symbols as in 5.122, 5.124 and 5.127 are the eye, triple bud rod, piriformshape, pillarshape, grainshape and double axe with scarf. Although these items cannot actually be in the air above, they are depicted as hovering over the human figures who do not pay any attention to them. The celestial sign, the skyline, is seen above in 5.124. In performing the act, the tree puller usually uses both arms. If the tree puller uses only one arm to grasp the tree then the other may reach out and gesture to other figures in the scene as in 5.123 and 5.127. In 5.123, the only example where something is held, the man holds a piriform rhyton²⁶ in his outstretched hand. When rocky ground or boulders are shown they provide a natural base for the puller to step up to the right height to perform the act as in 5.121, 5.123 and 5.127. We should see 5.126 in the same way, allowing that the looping rocks supporting the tree would have been extended around for the puller to stand upon, but the constraints of the circular lentoid composition did not provide the space to do so. When the tree is growing out of a shrine constructed in a paved area as in 5.122, the puller has the paving to stand upon but he still exhibits the same stepping pose. The ring bezel 5.124 is quite worn and there is no clear base for the puller but he still has the stepping pose as if rocks were there. Accordingly, it is hard to substantiate suggestions of the puller dancing or swinging on the tree when all the seal relief details are consulted, rather than the line drawings which sometimes omit the rocks. Most images clearly show that the puller is firmly on the rocks/ground, pushing up to reach the tree. The human pulling the tree may be a woman or a man. Both wear standard Minoan attire. The woman has a bare breast and does not wear one of the more familiar skirt variations but dons long pants. The wearing of pants, which cling close to the body and are sometimes diaphanous, has led some readers to see the women as nude. This is never the case, and close observation will always reveal the hemline marked at the calf. The man wears belt, codpiece and kilt with the rest of his body bare. Their bodies are appropriately shaped as female and male within the Minoan norm, the woman with generous bosom and some exaggeration of the thighs and buttocks, and the man lean and muscular. Their heads show some shape allowing for the minute size

26 For piriform, globular, alabastron and ovoid rhyta see Koehl 2006, 85-114 and 131-136.

– a nose in profile, an eye perhaps – but are too small to show individual identity or emotion. Their hair is in long ringlets or braided and is regularly shown as dots. In performing the tree pulling, the humans raise their heads so their faces can look up at the tree canopy, except for 5.123 where the woman's head is turned towards the other figures in the scene to whom she is also gesturing with her free hand. When pulling the tree, women and men are shown in full control of their limbs and actions. Other figures in the scenes are carefully posed. They are boulder kneelers as in 5.121 and 5.122, beholders of epiphanies as in 5.123 and 5.124 or witnesses to the ceremony like the women in 5.122 and 5.127. As standing or seated figures, they too give deliberate gestures.

This ceremony has always been seen generally as part of the nature worship of the Minoans, from allowing that the tree is sacred through to celebrating animism, but the detail of the seals has shown that there are many layers of meaning in this complex image²⁷. The tree, the focus of the human act, is the symbol of nature, of growth emanating from the sacred ground itself and found so important that a shrine is constructed around it. These focus trees may vary as to foliage and flower shape, with this variation possibly indicating the olive, which is vital for the economy, the fig or the grape. The tree is full of flowers and the bees are buzzing to pollinate the blossoms; so this must be a spring ceremony. The human partakes of this bursting life by grasping the tree and pulling it over her/him while the symbols connecting to the other world watch over the mortal. When the woman/man pulls the tree down it must shower him/her with petals or, more importantly, pollen. However, the pulling may also be shaking – it is very hard to indicate this in a static art form – a movement duplicating the movement of wind through the trees. If this is also intended by the artist then the “showering” of pollen would be even more effective. In taking into account the bees and beehive linked to the tree, and remembering the other seal images with little bees working away at pollen and bee bread balls²⁸, we need to remember the importance of honey to this community as the only available sweetener and for its antiseptic and medicinal properties. In all these details we can see that the celebration of spring and the fertilising of the cropping tree is the essence of the pulling the tree ceremony. The seasonal nature of the ceremony suggests that it is performed every spring, perhaps in each community. Thus, as a regularly repeated ceremony, it would carry added import. The human is the active participant in this seasonal miracle and all the while performs the ceremony with deliberative care and serious intensity. There are no physical indicators of an out-of-body state²⁹. The cultscape has specifically set the scene as linking this world with the other, and so humans perform an act which completely identifies them with the regenerative forces of nature – even to personifying the wind or bee as pollinator of the sacred tree.

27 Caroline Tully, 2018b, gives a detailed discussion of tree worship in the Aegean, Egypt, the Levant and Cyprus in her important monograph, *Aegaeum* 42.

28 See the discussion on bees in Crowley 2014a, 129-139.

29 Nevertheless, much has been written on this ceremony as being performed by a human in ecstasy or trance, McGowan 2011; Tully 2016, 19-30; Tully and Crooks 2015, 129-169 and MNEME 749-752. The phenomenon of ecstatic experience in the ancient world is generally addressed in Stein et al 2022, with papers on the Aegean by Bonney, Foster, Lupack, Morris and Peatfield and Tully.

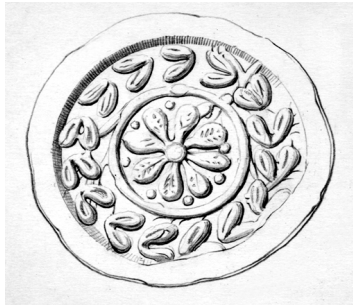
Comparisons with Images in Other Media

1. Flowers and leaves in gold jewellery from Mochlos.
FLL, 166 and Plates 131 A-B, 132 A-B.
2. The extensive use of floral/foliate motifs in Kamares pottery designs.
FLL, Plates 12 to 21.
3. Papyrus, palms and griffins in the Throne Room Frescoes, Knossos.
CM, Plate 33.
A careful recalibration of the original fragments is found in Galanakis et al. 2017, 47-98.
4. White lilies in a flower garden in the Amnisos Fresco.
CM, Plate XXII.
5. Spirals, papyrus, triple bud and rosette patterns on the stone ceiling of the grave chamber of the Orchomenos Tholos.
CM, Plate 161.

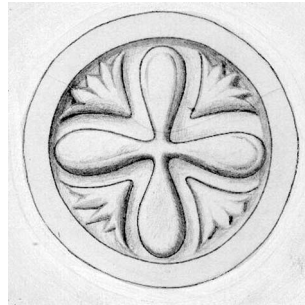
Plates 5.1 to 5.129

Flowers, Leaves and Branches

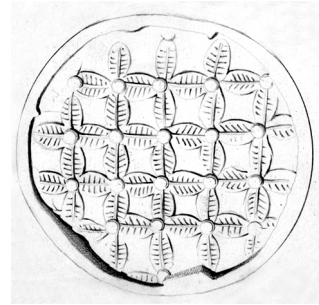
Flowers, Leaves and Branches – *Early Seal Period*



5.1 – rosette, double leaf band
(II.1 228/EMIII-MMIA)



5.2 – quatrefoil, papyrus
(II.5 219/MM II)



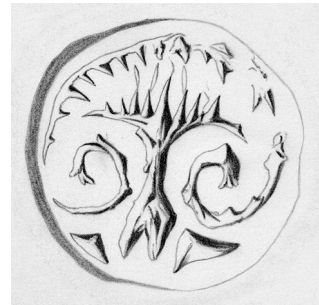
5.3 – quatrefoil pattern
(II.1 241/EM III-MM IA)



5.4 – lily
(VS 3 41/MM II)



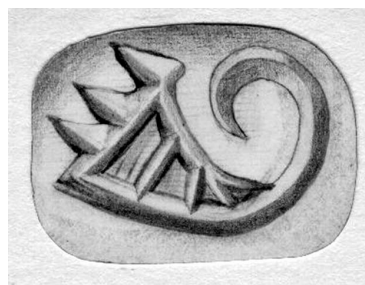
5.5 – crocus
(XI 12c/MM II-MM III)



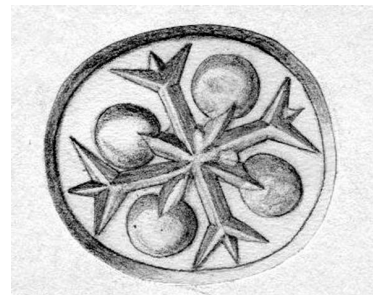
5.6 – papyrus
(VIII 22b/MM II)



5.7 – triple bud, leaf, petaloid
(II.1 90/MM II)



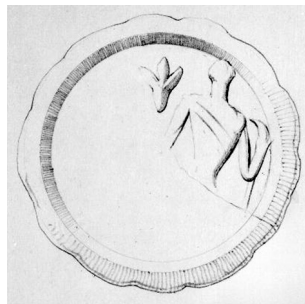
5.8 – truncated petaloid
(II.2 250a/MM II)



5.9 – flower cross
(II.2 164a/MM II)



5.10 – triple bud
(II.5 323/MM II)

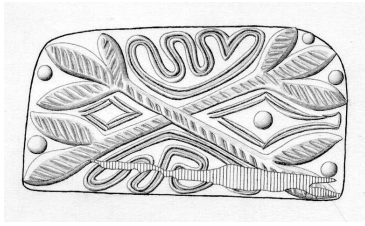


5.11 – triple bud
(II.5 325/EM III-MM IA?)

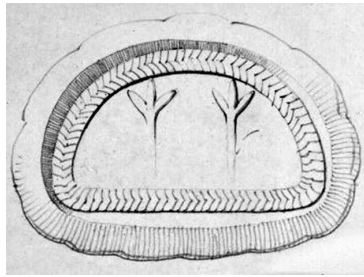


5.12 – triple bud
(II.2 242a/MM I)

Flowers, Leaves and Branches – *Early Seal Period (cont.)*



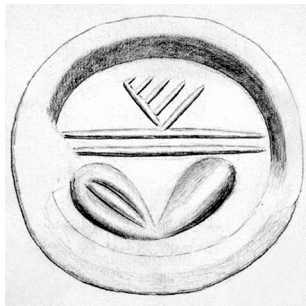
5.13 – triple bud rod
(VS 1A 295/EM III-MM IA?)



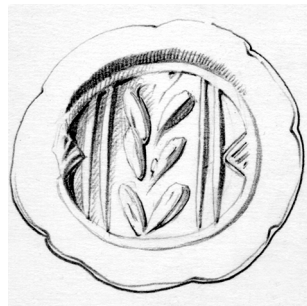
5.14 – triple bud
(II.5 230/EM III-MM IA?)



5.15 – triple bud lily
(II.2 316a/MM II)



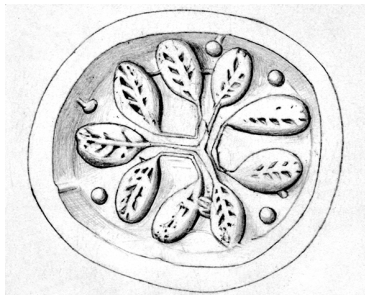
5.16 – double leaf
(II.1 379/EM III-MM IA)



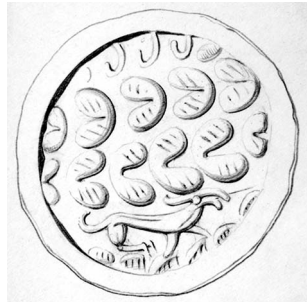
5.17 – double leaf band
(II.1 333b/EM III-MM IA)



5.18 – leaf band
(II.6 179/MM II)



5.19 – leaves
(II.1 44/EM III-MM IA?)



5.20 – leaves
(II.1 295a/EM III-MM IA)



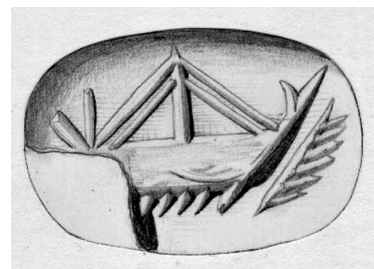
5.21 – spiral leaf band
(II.1 222a/EM III-MM IA)



5.22 – branch, agrimi
(II.2 125a/MM II)



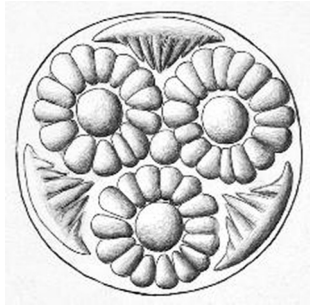
5.23 – branch, bird
(II.2 184a/MM II)



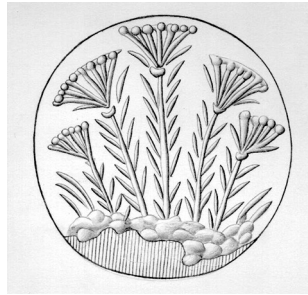
5.24 – branch, ship
(II.2 261b/MM II)

The Bounty of Nature

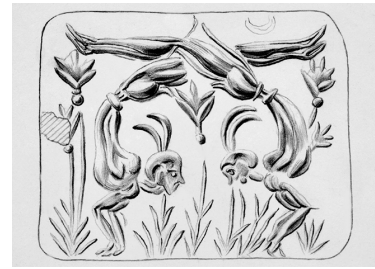
Flowers, Leaves and Branches – *Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art*



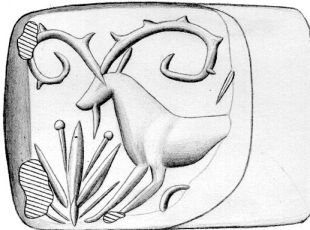
5.25 – rosette, papyrus
(II.8 116/MM III-LM I)



5.26 – papyrus flower plant
(VS 1A 46/MM III-LM I)



5.27 – flower plants
(VI 184/MM III-LM I)



5.28 – crocus, agrimi
(VS 1B 247/LM I)



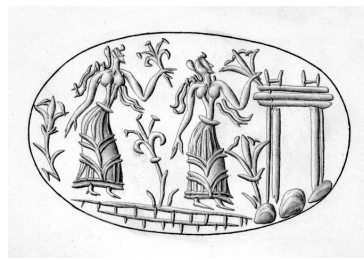
5.29 – papyrus, birds
(VI 459/LM I)



5.30 – papyrus lily
(II.8 285/LM I-LM II?)



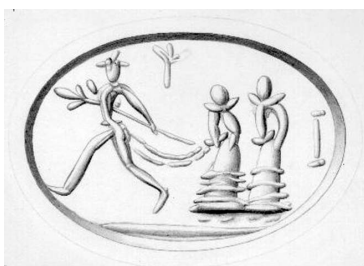
5.31 – flower field
(II.3 51/LM I-LM II)



5.32 – flower field
(VS 1B 113/LB I-LB II)



5.33 – lily, papyrus, women
(VS 3 243/LB I-LB II)



5.34 – triple bud rod
(V 173/LH I-LH II)



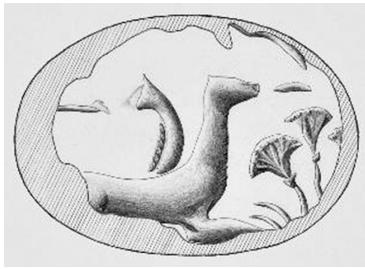
5.35 – crocus
(III 349/LM I-LM II)



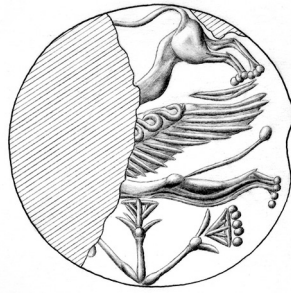
5.36 – papyrus
(XI 20a/LM I)

The Bounty of Nature

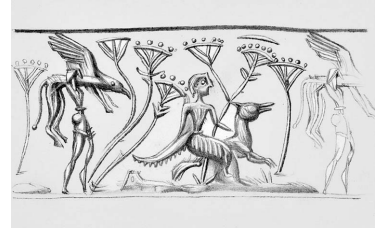
Flowers, Leaves and Branches – *Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art (cont.)*



5.37 – papyrus, dragons
(II.6 34/LM I)



5.38 – papyrus, griffin, lion
(VS 3 480/LM I-LM II)



5.39 – papyrus
(VI 321/LM I-LM II)



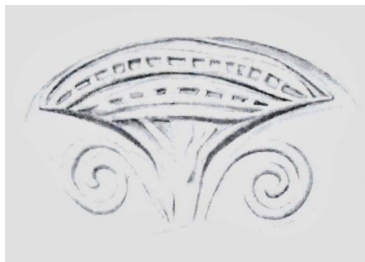
5.40 – papyrus tree of life
(II.6 102/LM I)



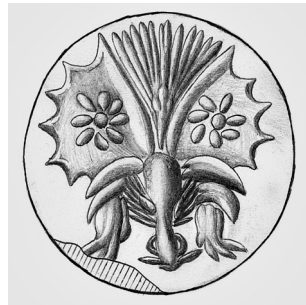
5.41 – rosette tree of life
(VI 310/LB I-LB II)



5.42 – triple bud rod
(XIII 39/-)



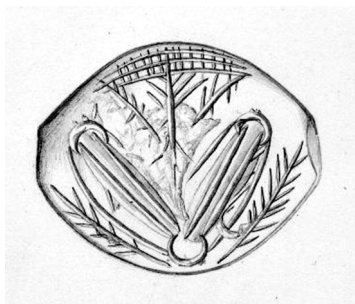
5.43 – papyrus lily
(X 120/LM)



5.44 – rosette
(II.7 158/LM I)



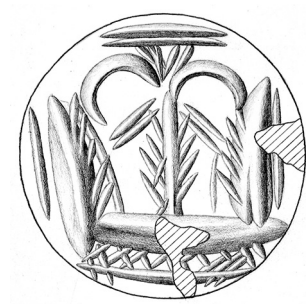
5.45 – rosette, papyrus
(II.7 104A/LM I)



5.46 – leaf, branch, papyrus
(X 230/LM I)



5.47 – ivy leaf, branch
(IV 234/LM I)



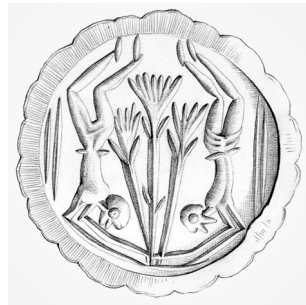
5.48 – papyrus lily, double horns
(III 345/LM I)

The Bounty of Nature

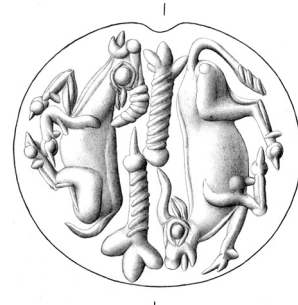
Flowers, Leaves and Branches – *Legacy and Late Periods*



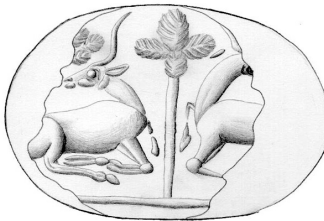
5.49 – flower plant
(XII 249/LB II-LB IIIA1)



5.50 – papyrus
(I 131/LB II-LB IIIA1)



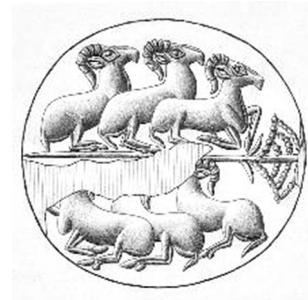
5.51 – triple bud rod
(I 53/LB II-LB IIIA1)



5.52 – tree of life
(VS 1B 354/LB II-LB IIIA1)



5.53 – tree of life
(I 87/LB II-LB IIIA1)



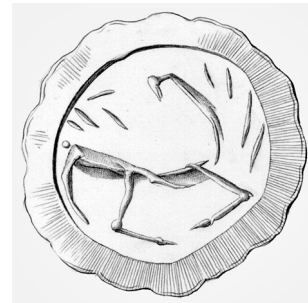
5.54 – tree of life
(II.8 521/LB II-LB IIIA1)



5.55 – branches
(I 42/LH IIIA2-LH IIIB)



5.56 – branches
(VS 3 180/LH IIIA2-LH IIIB)



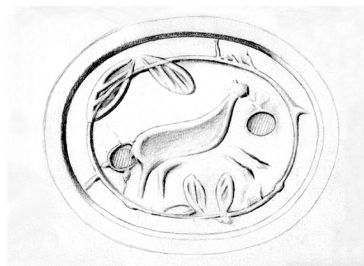
5.57 – branches
(I.29/LH IIIA2-LH IIIB)

Plants and Trees

Plants and Trees – *Early Seal Period*



5.58 – plant, tree
(II.1 64b/EM III-MM IA)



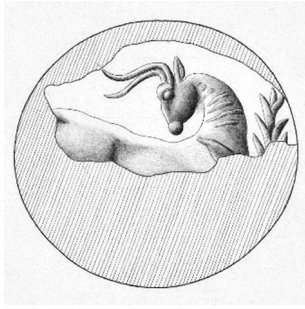
5.59 – leaves as plants
(II.1 392b/EM III-MM IA)



5.60 – tree
(VI 45a/MM II)

The Bounty of Nature

Plants and Trees – *Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art*



5.61 – plant, bull
(II.8 437/LB I-LB II)



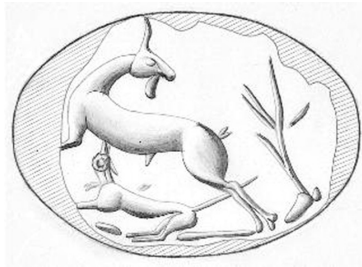
5.62 – plant, boar
(I 436a/LM I)



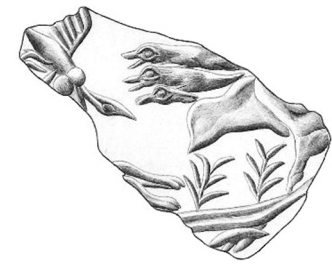
5.63 – plant, lion
(I 272a/LB I-LB II)



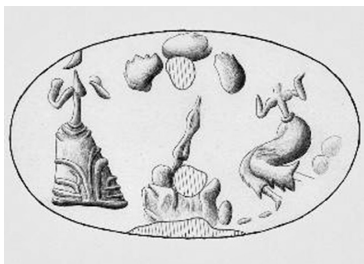
5.64 – tree, agrimi
(VI 178/MM III-LM I)



5.65 – tree, agrimi, hound
(II.8 353/MM III-LM I)



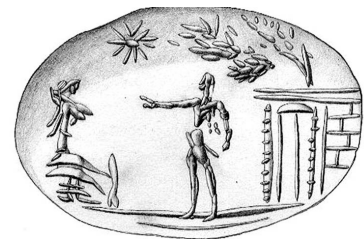
5.66 – plants, birds
(II.8 370/LM I)



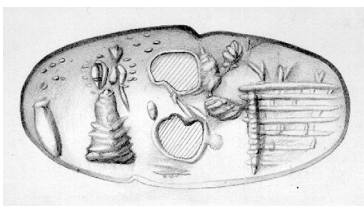
5.67 – tree growing from rocky ground
(II.6 5/LM I)



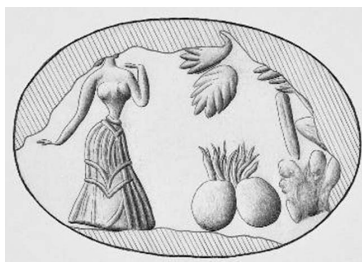
5.68 – tree shrine
(VS 1A 176/LM I)



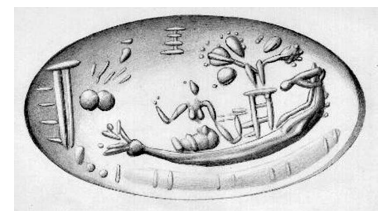
5.69 – tree shrine
(XI 28/LM I)



5.70 – tree shrine
(II.3 15/LM I)



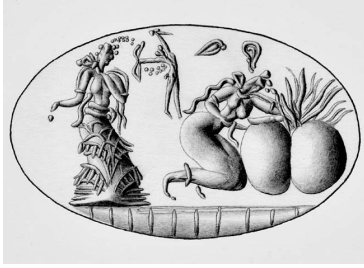
5.71 – tree shrine, boulders with plants
(II.6 2/LM I)



5.72 – grand boat, tree shrine
(II.3 252/LM I)

The Bounty of Nature

Plants and Trees – *Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art (cont.)*



5.73 – boulders with plants
(VI 278/LMI)



5.74 – plants, deity
(II.3 171/LM I)



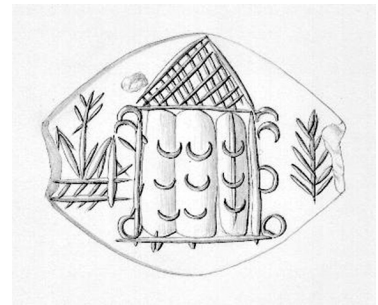
5.75 – plants, genius
(I 231/LB I-LB II)



5.76 – ewer with plants
(II.3 261/LM I)



5.77 – vase with plants
(III 245/LM I)



5.78 – plants, double horns
(X 101/LM I)

Plants and Trees – *Legacy and Late Periods*



5.79 – plant, agrimia
(I 45/LB IIIA)



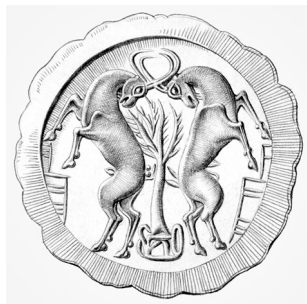
5.80 – tree, agrimi
(II.6 248/LM IIIA1)



5.81 – tree, bull
(XI 248/LM IIIA1)



5.82 – tree
(VS 1B 137/LB II-LB IIIA1)



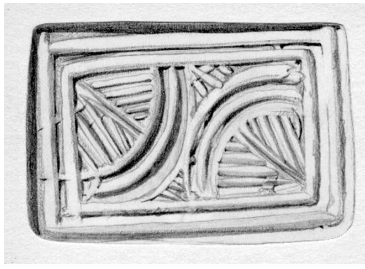
5.83 – tree of life
(I 123/LB II-LB IIIA1)



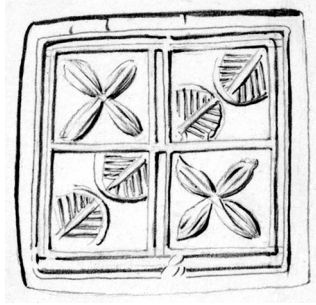
5.84 – tree of life
(VI 446/LB IIIA1-LB IIIA2)

Palmettes, Palm Plants and Palm Trees

Palmettes, Palm Plants and Palm Trees – *Early Seal Period*



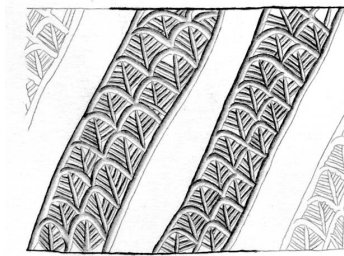
5.85 – palmettes
(II.2 70b/EM III-MM IA)



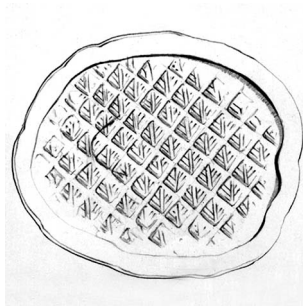
5.86 – palmettes
(II.1 450/EM III-MM IA)



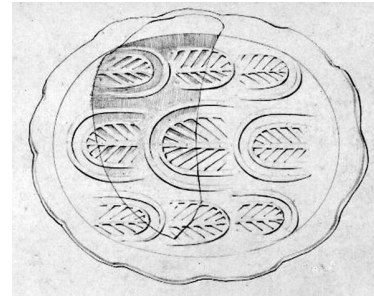
5.87 – palmette band
(VS 3 186/MM IA)



5.88 – palmette band
(III.31/MM II)



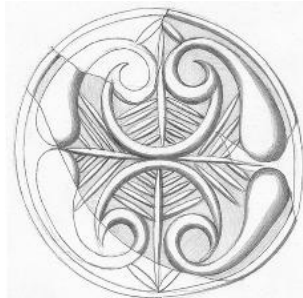
5.89 – palmette pattern
(II.1 242/EM III-MM IA)



5.90 – palmettes
(II.5 206/EM III-MM IA)



5.91 – palmettes, spirals
(IV 42a/EM III-MM IA)



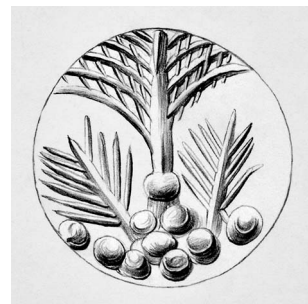
5.92 – palmettes, spirals
(II.8 20/MM II)



5.93 – palmette
(VI 7/EM III-MM IA)



5.94 – palmette band
(II.1 252a/EM III-MM IA)



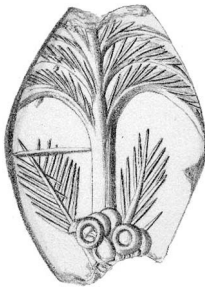
5.95 – palm tree growing from rocky
ground (VI 157/MM II-MM III)



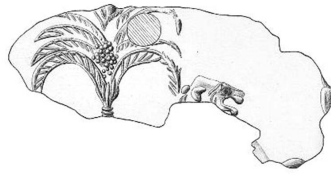
5.96 – palmettes
(VI 93b/MM II)

The Bounty of Nature

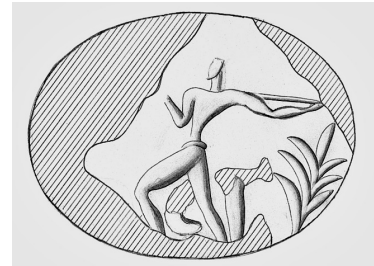
Palmettes, Palm Plants and Palm Trees – *Minoan High Art*



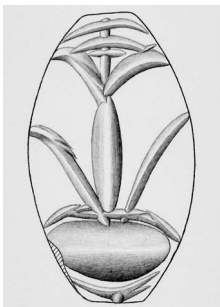
5.97 – tree growing from rocky ground
(XII 180/LM I)



5.98 – palm tree
(II.8 297/LM I-LM II)



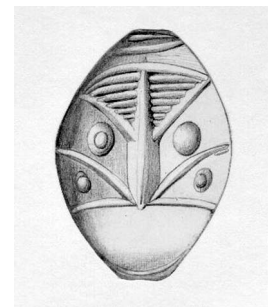
5.99 – palm plant
(II.7 19/LM I)



5.100 – palmette tree
(VI 213/LM I)



5.101 – palmette tree
(II.3 12a/LM I)



5.102 – palmette tree
(II.3 253/LM I)



5.103 – palm tree, dragon
(VI 362/LM I)



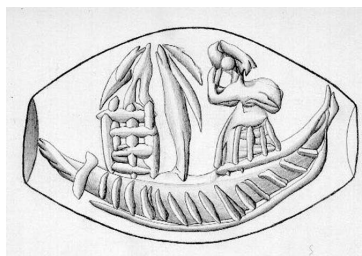
5.104 – palm tree, griffin
(II.7 87/LM I)



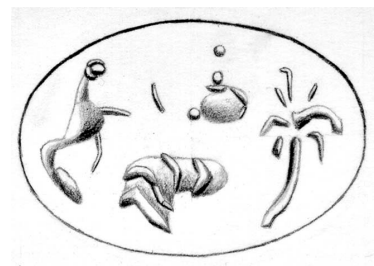
5.105 – palm plant, altar
(I 410/LB I)



5.106 – palm plant, shrine
(II.6 1/LM I)



5.107 – palm tree, grand boat
(VS 1A 55/LM I)



5.108 – palm tree
(IS 114/LB I-LB II)

Palmettes, Palm Plants and Palm Trees – *Legacy and Late Periods*



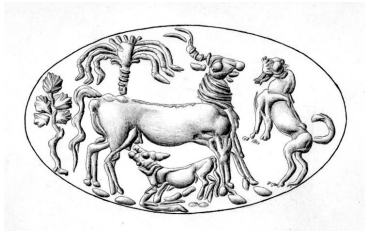
5.109 – palm tree, lions
(I 71/LB II)



5.110 – palm tree, bull
(I 57/LB II-LB IIIA1)



5.111 – palm tree, bull
(V 157/LB II-LB IIIA1)



5.112 – palm tree
(VS 1B 136/LB II-LB IIIA1)



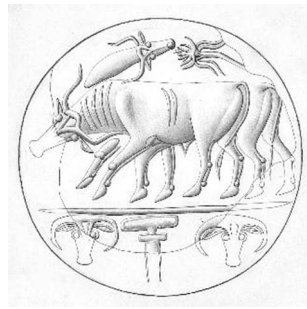
5.113 – palm plants
(XI 55b/LB II-LB IIIA1)



5.114 – palm plant
(XI 284/LB II-LB IIIA1)



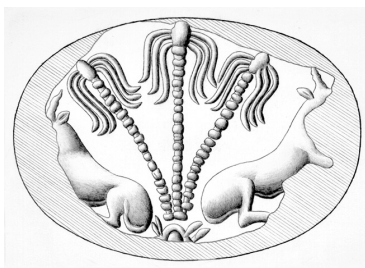
5.115 – palm tree
(XI 52/LH II-LH IIIA1)



5.116 – palm tree
(II.8 498/LB II-LB IIIA1?)



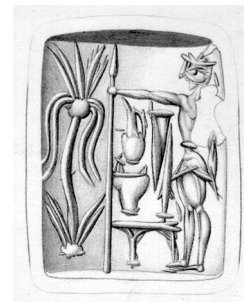
5.117 – palm trees
(VS 1B 353/LB IIIA1-LB IIIA2)



5.118 – palm tree of life
(I 375/LB II)



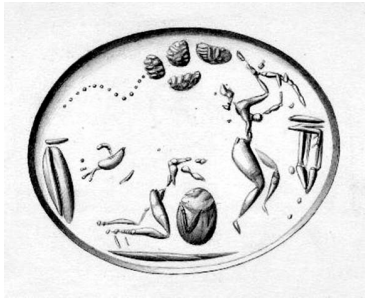
5.119 – palm tree, curved altar
(VS 1A 75/LB II-LB IIIA1)



5.120 – palm tree, sacrifice altar
(V 608/LM IIIA1-LM IIIA2)

Iconographic Interpretation: Two Beautiful Gardens

The Ceremony of Pulling the Tree



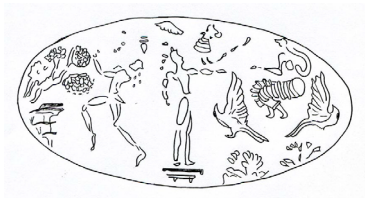
5.121 – woman tree puller, man boulder kneeler (II.3 114/LM I)



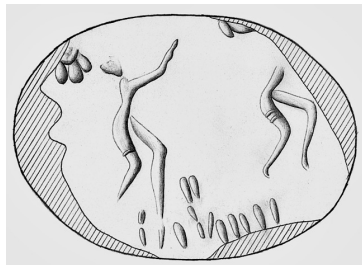
5.122 – man tree puller, man boulder kneeler (Archanes Cult Ring/LM I)



5.123 – woman tree puller, man tree puller (Minos Ring/LM I)



5.124 – man tree puller (Poros Ring/LM I)



5.125 – man tree puller (II.7 10/LM I)



5.126 – woman tree puller (XII 264/LM I)



impression



impression



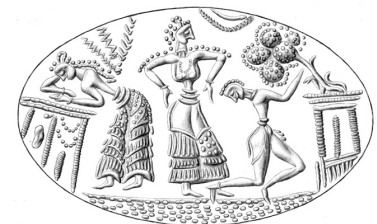
impression



5.127 – man tree puller (I 219/LM I)



5.128 – woman tree puller (I 126/LB I-LB II)



5.129 – man tree puller (I 126/LB II-LB IIIA1)

Chapter 6 The Life of Animals

Animal life is the most often represented subject matter in Aegean seal images. Animals fall into two groups, the mammals and the birds/insects¹. Each has its own identifying characteristics and artistic design possibilities. For the mammals, interest is divided between the wild forest animals and domesticated animals. For the birds and insects, much space is given over to a whole variety of birds, stationary and in flight, while the insects are usually posed at rest.

Forest Animals

Forest Animals – *Early Seal Period* (Plates 6.1 to 6.12)

The agrimi is an early favourite. This beautiful animal, the Cretan wild goat, is shown standing amid foliage as in 6.1 and amid water and rocks as in 6.2. It is shown in a typical early animal file, the horns forming a pattern, as in 6.3. It may be shown resting couchant as in 6.7 or in full action pose in an early flying gallop as in 6.4. In 6.5 the agrimi with arrow embedded is seen as the quarry of a human hunter. The hunter's trusty hound is a regular attacker of agrimia as in 6.56 and 6.57. The agrimi head is often depicted as in 6.6. In 6.181 to 6.183 a young animal is shown as a sacrifice, its crossed legs indicating its fate. The artist celebrates the most characteristic feature of the animal, the great curving horns, by sometimes exaggerating their shape and size as in 6.7. Somewhat less often depicted is the stag², celebrated for its great antlers which are shown exaggerated in the protome of 6.8. Also in favour is the wild boar³. The early images of a standing boar as in 6.9 and 6.10 already show the characteristic thick-set body, bristling hair along the back, snout and thin tail. These details are repeated in the image of three boars in 6.11. The snout and tusk are stressed in the boar head in 6.12 where a knife indicates either sacrifice or butchering after the hunt. In 6.184 to 6.186 the crossed legs indicate a boar trussed for sacrifice. Each of these forest animals is accorded the important status of sole subject.

Forest Animals – *Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art* (Plates 6.13 to 6.30)

All the animals come alive in this period through the rendering of internal detail like muscling and with the portrayal of movement. The agrimi, with its great horns featured, remains a favourite subject. It

1 Search the IconAegean Database in the Element field on agrimi, stag, boar, hound, cat, bull, ram, horse, bird, bee, butterfly, dragonfly, scorpion, spider, attendant and familiar. Search in the *Icon* field on animal pair, animal group, animal standing, resting, rearing, flying gallop, flying leap, reverse twist, mating, suckling, caring for young, playing, scratching, distressed, contorted, sacrificed, tethered, penned, netted, chasing, crunching, seizing, stalking, holding at bay, carrying the catch, feeding on the catch and animal with the special object.

Search the IconADict Database for the definition of each term or refer to IAS.

2 In the IconAegean Vocabulary mammals are listed by the male name since most illustrations indicate the male. When the sex and or age of the animal is clearly shown then male, female or juvenile is added. This sometimes makes for cumbersome nomenclature (*e.g.* bull as female, suckling) but having the one term for the genus and additional terms for the age and sex facilitates Database searching. In discussion, the usual terms for female and juvenile animals are used (*e.g.* agrimi, kid, doe, fawn, sow, piglet, bitch, pup, cow, calf, ewe, lamb).

3 Termed boar rather than pig because it is clear that the wild, rather than the domesticated, animal is meant in almost every case. The boar in 6.9 does appear to be standing on squared blocks or behind a constructed barrier and so may not be in a wild context.

rests couchant in 6.13 and leaps out in 6.14. It is in distress in 6.15, its open mouth and contorted pose indicating the pain it feels as the arrow bites deep into its belly. Agrimia mate in 6.16 but this time the male's open mouth registers happier sensations. An agrimi tenderly turns to lick its suckling kid in 6.17. The fragment of 6.18 shows the protective stance of the mother as she cares for her young. The hunt theme returns in 6.19 where a hunter wrestles with a great buck, his hound ever helpful. Hounds attack agrimia in 6.73 and 6.74. The agrimi becomes a motif in talismanic seals⁴. Then, in symbolic mode, the agrimi, as familiar, identifies an Agrimi Lady in 6.20 and an Agrimi Lord in 6.21. A magnificent stag is the sole subject in 6.22 where it turns its head to show its great antlers. Different antlers indicate the different species of red deer and fallow deer in 6.22 to 6.27, and the dappled hide of some animals is shown. A doe suckles her fawn in 6.23 but it is the animal attack and the hunt that are featured in 2.28 and 6.24 to 6.26. In 2.28 a lion crunches a stag. In 6.24 a hound is the predator, coursing along in the flying gallop chasing the stag. In 6.25 the imbedded arrow indicates a human hunter. In 6.26 the stag's assailants are indicated by symbol, the lion leg for the animal predator and the eight shield for a human hunter. In 6.27 the stag head carries grand antlers and is surmounted by a sunburst. For the boar, as in 6.28 to 6.30, solid shape and upright bristles on the backbone remain the characteristic features, although in some depictions as in 6.28, bristle marks cover the hide. In 6.28 boars are shown as a pair assuming identical poses. Pairings are a favourite animal depiction, with groups less common. A sow suckles piglets in 6.29. A huge boar is speared by a hunter in 6.30.

Forest Animals – *Legacy and Late Periods* (Plates 6.31 to 6.48)

There is continued interest here in all three forest animals. With the agrimi, the great horns are still a feature as is the up-turned short tail. Shown as a sole subject, the agrimi is usually standing as in 6.31. It is the quarry of hound and human hunter as in 6.32, 6.33 and 6.109. However, more formal agrimi presentations are shown. Agrimia are attendants at a tree of life in 6.34. They are posed rampant in saltire about a staff/spear in 6.35 where their heads are turned regardant so the horns can also cross in saltire. In 6.36 agrimi heads in profile frame a frontal bull head. An Agrimi Lady is shown in 6.37, an Agrimi Lord rides in his agrimi chariot in 6.38 while an Agrimi Master is shown in 6.39. Both species of deer are known, as shown with the stag as sole subject in 6.40 and 6.41. It is the prey of a griffin in 6.42 and is carried off as catch by a genius in 6.43⁵. A Stag Master is seen in 6.44 and 6.45. The boar image is repeated as sole subject, shown in 6.46 as a sow in a palm thicket. As a sacrifice it lies on a sacrifice altar being dismembered by a server in 6.47. Note the tusk clearly shown. For the hunter, the boar is a fearsome adversary, and there is always the risk that the boar will be victorious as in 6.48.

Domesticated Animals

Domesticated Animals – *Early Seal Period* (Plates 6.49 to 6.72)

The hound⁶ begins its record in the earliest seal designs as in 6.49 and continues to be depicted through the Early Seal Period, mostly as sole subject as in 6.50 to 6.52. The hound already shows its characteristic pointed ears and usually has a long tail which ends in a point and curls up over its back. Sometimes, as in 6.51, the hound has its tongue shown lolling out as the animal does when it pants to cool itself. This characteristic canine panting identifies the animal heads like the ones in 6.53 and 6.54 as hound heads. The mouth open, with teeth showing and the tongue lolling down, is an accurate observation of the hound's panting behaviour and the Minoan artist, as always, chooses the most characteristic feature to depict identity. Identifying 6.53, 6.54 and similar images as hounds panting makes much more sense

4 The analysis of the talismanic seals by Artemis Onassoglou also shows the agrimi as a favoured topic, classified as the *Wildziegen-Motiv*, CMS B2, 128-134, XLVII-XLVIII.

5 For the discussion on the griffin and the genius see Chapter 10 below.

6 Termed hound rather than dog because it is clear that they are hunting animals and not simply pet dogs.

than to suggest they are wolves. Another detail in 6.53 is how the neck is handled. It may represent the rough coat but is more likely to be a collar as seen also in 6.52, thus reminding us that the human owner is never far away. We see the owner as hunter in 6.55, aiming his arrow with his trusty hound at heel. The hound as predator in animal attack scenes is seen in 6.56 and 6.57, chasing and crunching its quarry. The other animal predator, the lion, is usually shown with round ears, a thickness at the neck for the mane and a tail with a knob on the end. However, in these early works the carving is often not fine enough to clearly distinguish whether a hound or a lion is meant, and this has led to the use of the composite term dog/lion for the images on the soft stone three sided prisms⁷. The cat appears in MM II, its feline shape, large round eyes and pointed ears already clear in 6.58. In 6.59 it has its rear swept up into a curled tail and is paired with a lily flower. The cat's characteristic sejant pose appears in 6.60 where it is accompanied by hieroglyphs. Cat heads become a favourite design as in 6.61 to 6.63, their eyes, ears and whiskers carefully delineated. Cattle and sheep, too, appear in MM II. The bull is shown couchant against its wickerwork barrier in 6.64 and standing with head lowered against divided barriers in 6.65. A spear wounds a bull in distress in 6.66. There is a double suckling scene in 6.67 and a fragment shows a cow in 6.68. The young sacrificed animals in 6.187 and 6.188 are likely to be calves. The bull head motif begins its long presence, shown frontal as in 6.69 with the horns rising up from the head⁸. As for sheep, the ram is shown with its characteristic down-curving horns curling around the head as in 6.70 and 6.71. In the ram head shown frontal in 6.72 the horns also curve down around the face⁹.

The hieroglyphic seals 6.53 and 6.54 with their hound head as CHIC 018 draw attention to the many hieroglyphic signs that are sourced from animal, bird and insect shapes, CHIC 011 to 021.

Domesticated Animals – Experimentation Period (Plates 6.73 to 6.78)

Some fine depictions are known from this creative period. The hound attacks agrimia, holding a great buck at bay in 6.73 and seizing a fleeing one in 6.74. As the identifying familiar, it accompanies the Hound Lord in 6.75. A hunter chases a great bull in 6.76 while a leaper has missed his somersault and slides down on the horns of the bull in 6.77. The sole subject ram image in 6.78 is a particularly fine study with its shaggy fleece and horns curved characteristically forward to frame its profile head.

Domesticated Animals – Minoan High Art (Plates 6.79 to 6.108)

Observant detail is the hallmark of the mammal depictions in Minoan High Art. This interest, together with the continuing popularity of the mammals as subjects, produces a great variety of poses: standing, resting, rearing, flying gallop, flying leap, reverse twist, mating, suckling, caring for young, playing, scratching, distressed, contorted, sacrificed, tethered, penned, netted, chasing, crunching, seizing, stalking, holding at bay, carrying the catch and feeding on the catch. Examples of this variety are shown in the portrayal of hound, cat, bull, ram and, eventually, horse. In 6.79 to 6.81 hounds wearing their master's collars are twisting, scratching and playing, and in 6.82 a tethered bitch is suckling and caring for her pups. In 6.83 and 6.84 the hound is the predator, seizing the agrimi at full flying gallop and then sharing the spoil with its master. In the symbolic presentations 6.85 to 6.87 we see the Hound Master, Hound Lord and Hound Lady. The cat in this period is shown as the predator of birds. In 6.88 it stalks and startles a bird. In 6.89 and 6.90 it plunges through a group of birds to grasp one by crunching or seizing. The bull and its activities now become major subject matter. As sole subject it is a favourite image, being shown resting as with the couchant bull pair in 6.91 or distressed as with the

7 See the extensive work by Maria Anastasiadou, CMS B9, Motif 16 Dog/lion, 178 to 179 and 689 to 694. Note 20c is identified as having a collar, 493 and 691.

8 For a profile view with upturned horns see CMS II.2 78a.

9 Generally in the animal head focus designs the ram head horns curve down around the head while the bull head horns rise up, spreading over the head. The ram head should narrow to the mouth but some of the images with horns down show a strong "square" face and so they are most likely meant to be bull heads. With some of the simpler designs it is hard to identify which animal is meant, whatever the placement of the horns.

bull in 6.92 sinking down and throwing its head up with open mouth and protruding tongue. There is a suckling scene in 6.93 and an animal attack scene in 6.94 which shows the bull as the prey of a lion. When humans are involved the bull has many roles. The hunter spears it with a grand spear in 6.95 and nets it in 6.96. Yet, even as the net catches the great bull it turns, trampling the fallen hunter. A whole new theme appears at this time – the bull sports. There are many images of leapers and bulls but the somersaulting scene as in 6.97 is a favourite. In 6.98 the bull is the identifying familiar of the Bull Lord, as also in 6.99 where substitution places a genius as the Lord. A bull head is surmounted by a double axe in 6.100¹⁰, and a bull sacrifice is seen in 6.191 and 6.192. Sheep continue to be of interest. The ram is featured in a sole subject depiction in 6.101. A herder minds his rams in 6.102 and milks his ewes in 6.103. Four ram heads in profile are shown in 6.104. In a variation of the Mistress of Animals where only one animal is shown, the Mistress with Animal, a Ram Mistress holds a ram rampant and resting on her shoulder¹¹. A new animal subject appears at this time – the horse. It is regularly depicted as pulling a chariot as in 6.106 and usually with a driver applying the whip as in 6.107. A one only image in 6.108 shows a huge horse superimposed on a ship being rowed, as discussed above in Chapter 3. However, depictions are not numerous and the horse, such a late iconographic starter, never becomes a favourite subject although it may have been a prestige possession.

Domesticated Animals – *Legacy and Late Periods* (Plates 6.109 to 6.132)

All the domesticated animals except the cat continue strongly. For the hound, animal attacks and the hunt are still important. A hound attacks an agrimi as in 6.109 and is always by the side of its hunter master as in the lion hunt in 6.110. Symbolic representations are also displayed. In an antithetical group composition, hounds rampant regardant attend a curved altar below a sunburst in 6.111. Both the Hound Mistress and the Hound Master are seen in 6.112 and 6.113. A Hound Lord is identified by his huge familiar wearing an elaborate collar in 6.114. The bull as sole subject remains a favourite as with the statant animal in 6.115. As the prey of fearsome predators, we see the bull in 6.116 attacked by two griffins. Suckling scenes as in 6.117 emphasise the tender care of the cow in turning to lick the calf. The bull sports theme is now treated in a different manner from earlier images as seen in 6.118 where the bull is statant and the leaper assumes a convoluted acrobatic pose. A bull sacrifice is seen in 6.119 and bull heads are seen in 6.120, along with a frontal human head. Symbolic presentations abound. Bulls in an antithetical group attend a grand pillar in 6.121, a bull and a ram are placed with triple bud rods in 6.123 while a couchant bull is shown tethered to a pillar shrine in 6.123. A one only Bull Master is shown in 6.124 and a one only Bull Mistress in 6.125. In 6.126 a Bull Lord holds his familiar by a horn. A ewe is shown suckling a lamb as in 6.127 where the care of a herder is also included. The striking mirror reverse composition of 6.128 places rams with collars within triple horn bows and repeats with lambs couchant regardant below. The antithetical group composition in 6.129 has six couchant rams as attendants to a papyrus flower tree of life. Horse and chariot scenes continue as in 6.130 until they become attenuated as in 6.131. A late image of a horse is shown in 6.132.

Birds and Insects

Birds and Insects – *Early Seal Period* (Plates 6.133 to 6.147)

Birds are not among the earliest subjects but become a favourite by the end of the Early Seal Period. They are usually shown in profile and with wings close. Differentiation of species is also recorded. The swelling body of waterfowl is seen in 6.133 where the two birds are placed in a zweipass pattern. In 6.134 a perching bird has just alighted with wings elevated. The bird in 6.135 perches profile on a triple bud

¹⁰ It is interesting that the talismanic group does not have the bull as a motif but does include the bull head/bucranion. Onassoglou, CMS B2, *Bukranion-Motiv*, 120-128, XIV-XLVI.

¹¹ For the discussion on Mistress figures see Chapter 12 below.

rod, turning its head frontal to give full expression to the owl features which look almost human with the addition of long curling tresses. The two birds in 6.136 are likely wading birds as indicated by their long legs. In 6.137 bird heads are fixed to a central boss in a propellor-like pattern revolving clockwise. In 6.138 we may have the first butterfly image shown in plan with large rounded wings and long antennae. The bee is depicted in detail in profile as in 1.139 to 1.141. The abdomen has a swelling pear shape tapering to a point, there are two wings and two forelegs, and the head may have an eye, antennae and a proboscis. The most striking feature is that the artist ignores the six legs that a bee really does have to show only two which can function like arms with hands to make the honeycomb as in 6.141. The bee is placed beside triple bud flowers in 6.139 and is associated with many small shapes like a dot with wings in 6.140. In both 6.140 and 6.141 the bee as CHIC 020 combines with other hieroglyphs. Both the scorpion and the spider arachnids appear early¹². The scorpion has its stinging tail and pincers emphasised as in 6.142 to 6.144 although the number of legs varies. In the early seal 6.143 scorpions are placed with lions. This juxtaposition is also seen with the spider and lions in animal files in the early seal 6.146. By MM II the spider is a regular subject, usually with its eight legs drawn together so that it looks as if there are only four as in 6.147. These two arachnids share many artistic details. Both are drawn in plan as specimens seen from above, there is some carelessness as to how many legs are appropriate in each case and they are usually shown as sole subject. Note should be made of some EH II Mainland spider images like the Lerna sealing 6.145 although they do not have any immediate followers. The spider is again seen from above placed within a looping pattern, much as one would see a spider sitting in the middle of its web.

Birds and Insects – Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art (Plates 6.148 to 6.174)

The detail of bird and insect life continues to be elaborated. Birds are a favourite subject¹³. They are shown quietly staying as in 6.148, in agitated flight as in 6.149 or, in what comes to be a favourite pose as in 6.150, soaring upwards or flying horizontally depending on how the seal image is viewed. Much is made of the wing shapes: close, elevated or displayed. Across the various depictions the detail now identifies ducks and swans, owls and swallows, swift fliers and sea gulls. Appropriate bird habitat is regularly shown, as with the waveline and the papyrus marsh for the water birds as in 6.148 and 6.151, the rocky glen for the perching owls as in 6.152 and the sea with dolphins and jellyfish for the sea birds as in 6.153. In 6.152 there is still a penchant for patterning as seen in the placement of the four owls in antithetic pairs about a central rosette. The two swans in 6.154 may be in a prelude to mating. In the little vignette of bird life in 6.155 we see great consternation among the chicks in the nest and the mother bird flying in. Only the legs of the predator cat remain to show that this is an animal attack scene like the ones we saw in the cat discussion above in 6.88 to 6.90. The bird netted in 6.156 and straining against the mesh reminds us that the other bird predator is man. Yet, the bird is also a messenger to humans as seen in the flying swallow bringing the bracelet/garland in its beak in 6.158 and in 6.159 swooping down to the boulder kneeler. Symbolic representations in the antithetical group show birds as attendants to a palmette tree of life in 6.157 and to a Bird Mistress standing on waves in 6.160. The Bird Lady carries her familiar in the shape of a water bird in 6.161 and walks across her watery domain carried aloft by two birds in 6.162. Bees continue to be important subjects but with different depictions. The three bees holding the honeycomb in 6.136 link the iconography back to the earlier bee images in the body detail and to earlier compositions in the patterned movement around a circle. However, the new image of the bee is to incorporate it into scenes of human activity. The beehive is the important item seen in the far left of the ring bezel of 6.164 and 6.159, with bees now shown as dots emerging from the hive or “flying” up and across to trees. In 6.165 four beehives are again shown in the far left of the scene

12 The arachnids may conveniently be included under insects here as the artistic treatment is similar and there is no certainty that the Minoans saw them in the modern division into genera of insect and arachnids.

13 The analysis of the talismanic seals by Onassoglou, CMS B2, also shows the bird as a favoured topic, with the *Vogel-Motiv*, 138-154, L-LV.

while on an accompanying scene on the same mould there are birds and bee dots. In Minoan High Art butterflies and dragonflies come into their own. They are almost always shown in plan as viewed from above, their wings spread open. The butterfly, as in 6.166, 6.167, 1.169 and 1.170, is the most often depicted of the two. It has a long thin abdomen usually striped horizontally, two large rounded wings with circular markings springing from the thorax and the suggestion of another two wings above them, and a small head sprouting two curved antennae. The dragonfly, as in 6.169 and 6.170, has a slender abdomen, four narrow wings springing from the thorax and a small head which may sprout straight antennae. The butterfly may be featured in sole subject designs as in 6.166 and 6.167 or the butterfly and the dragonfly may be shown together as a fluttering pair as in 6.169 and 6.170. The beautiful design of four butterflies in 6.168 was discussed above in Chapter 3. It shows the sequence of the ephemeral life of the butterfly emerging to a fully winged creature only to weaken and die. In the centre of the composition the nestling curls of their abdomens reference the continuing delight of Minoan artists in seeing patterns in life forms. The butterfly is also found performing messenger roles with human figures as in 6.171 where it swoops down to a boulder kneeler who raises her arm in a greeting gesture. The two scorpions of 6.172 have their long tails curled to form a pattern while those in 6.173 are posed beside an S spiral, much as in the earlier prepalatial seal 3.13. The spider in 6.174 has its eight legs paired so as to look like four as in earlier Periods. Sometimes a ring around the spider or crosshatching suggests a spider web¹⁴. It appears that the scorpion and spider find a new life at this time in the talismanic seals where the cutting techniques quickly shape bodies and legs¹⁵.

Birds and Insects – *Legacy and Late Periods* (Plates 6.175 to 6.180)

Depictions of the the bird continue but in restricted usages. Birds in a flower plant setting are seen in 6.175. Echoes of the messenger bird are shown in the image of the bird with sailors in 6.176 and in 6.178 where birds fly freely in an open-air shrine as two women gesture. Animal attack scenes with the bird as prey are recalled in 6.177 where a griffin holds a water bird aloft in a carrying the catch *Icon*. In symbolic presentations birds perch on pillars each side of a shrine in 6.179 and in 6.180 an antithetical group composition poses two large birds as attendants to a grand pillar. The bees, butterflies, dragonflies, scorpions and spiders have disappeared from the repertoire.

Iconographic Interpretation: Exuberant Life Force

The overwhelming number of depictions of the animal world, more than any other discrete grouping, makes a strong statement about the importance of animal life to the Aegeans. Interpretation of the Minoan images follows below. The Mycenaean view of the animal kingdom is discussed below in Chapter 14.

Animals are the most numerous choice as sole subject but they also interact with humans and exotic and fantastic creatures, greatly extending the repertoire. Most are there at the beginning in the Early Seal Period and some continue right through all Periods, gaining strength of recognition as increasing detail gives them more animation. The favourite animals are, from the beginning, the animals of the mountain and forest, the agrimi, boar and stag. Domesticated animals, too, are there early with the favourite being the human's pet dog, his hunting hound, and then the cat, bull, ram and, eventually, the horse. Insects and birds are also there from the beginning but the roll-call changes over time. Early scorpions and spiders give way to butterflies and dragonflies, all seen from above in plan. The bee is always there, although differently portrayed in profile and then with the beehive and dot bees. Birds emerge from

14 See CMS XII D4b of MM II and CMS VI 226 of LM I.

15 The analysis of the talismanic seals by Onassoglou, CMS B2, records spider and scorpion motifs as *Spinne-Motiv*, 79-81, XXIX, and *Skorpion-Motiv*, 79-81, XXX.

generic depictions of heavy-bodied water birds and slighter framed passerines to show the detail of different species: swans, ducks, swallows, owls and sea birds.

From the beginning to the end the wild world of the forest captures the imagination of Minoans, even when the palace/cities are at their greatest extent. It is true that the forested mountains are never very far from urban centres but there must be more to this sustained interest than simple proximity. Certainly, the powerful presence of the mountains in Crete is felt strongly by the inhabitants and even the visitors of today. The forested mountains represent the original landscape before people tamed its lower slopes with fields and towns. This primal identity is encapsulated in the forest animals – the agrimi, stag and boar – whose strength and virility are depicted in graphic images of their life trajectory. They are the living force which completes that picture of wild Crete set early in the iconographic record, with the rocky mountain and the verdant tree-cover discussed above in Chapters 4 and 5. The primal identity of the forest as original landscape allows it to be considered as a wild yet safe place. Its difficult terrain, even inaccessibility, means that, in times of trouble, it could always be called upon to be a refuge for the populace fleeing attack. In this way there is a bond between humans and the forest animals who are wild but free. Somewhat cutting across this concept is to see the forest as the place of heroic endeavour in the hunt. While it may have begun as an activity to supplement the food supply, the hunt becomes a test of male strength, skill and bravery. For all these reasons it is entirely understandable that forest animals are deeply entrenched in the iconographic record.

The importance of domesticated animals is somewhat differently sourced. From the hound trained to hunt with its master to the animals farmed to provide food, all have a close daily presence with people. The hound is the great favourite of the domesticated animals. The hound is always there living its own special canine life while ever ready to support its master in the hunt. The cat, too, is known from the early seals but its sedentary pose there evolves in Minoan High Art to the active predator chasing and capturing birds. It is likely that these images record a domestic cat since even domesticated felines remain hunters – even more so if they become feral as wild cats. However, there is the possibility that all images, or at least the LM I predator ones, refer to the small African carnivore, the common genet. Perhaps it was known in its north African homeland not far south of Crete across the sea. Perhaps it was brought to Crete, becoming domiciled in an earlier migration than the one of more recent times that has left genet descendants still extant in Spain and France. Clear bull images are rather late starters in Minoan animal iconography, entering with several creditable depictions in the MM II Phaistos Sealings. In the Late Bronze Age it becomes a favourite animal subject. There are several reasons for this. As a magnificent beast exuding a powerful presence it poses statant or couchant filling sole subject images, and these are often doubled to show an animal pair. However, it is in its violent life that the bull displays all its strength and fighting spirit. It becomes quarry to the human hunter and prey to the great predators, the exotic lion and fantastic griffin, its suffering revealed in contorted poses, often with open bellowing mouth. Its other violent life is in the bull sports where the human adversary takes over the importance that the hunter signifies with the forest animals. Yet, in the bull sports, the bull protagonist appears to be something separate from the bull animal that acts elsewhere in similar roles to other domesticated livestock. The significance of this protagonist bull of the bull sports is discussed in Chapter 12 where it is recognised as the image that overshadows all other bull images in Minoan High Art. Sheep are a constant, if somewhat less depicted, subject in the iconographic repertoire. Their presence may be expected since they provide the staples of milk, cheese and meat, mainstays of Bronze Age life. There are some sensitive studies of rams in sole subject compositions as well as in pairs and groups. Suckling and caring for young scenes parallel the depictions of sheep being tended carefully by human herders. Through all these detailed renditions the artist registers how deeply the domesticated animals support daily life. The horse is a very late starter. It joins the iconographic repertoire in LM I/LB I and has a brief but brilliant life as the chariot harness animal. Its importance lies in its links to war and the hunt. Its role is to identify the elite who can aspire to own and drive this coveted status symbol. The horse comes into the Aegean world too late for it to forge a truly iconographic identity, and we do not find it associated with special objects or in antithetical group compositions or as the familiar of a deity.

For the birds and insects, the insects come earliest in the iconographic repertoire. The bee announces its debut in the iconography in MM II with a distinct profile rendering that is different from all the other insects which are characteristically shown in plan. This profile rendition closely follows the Egyptian hieroglyph for the bee¹⁶ and a direct inspiration from this source would explain the different artistic treatment the Minoans gave to the bee in contrast to other insects. The profile bee image is seen in the art and as the hieroglyphic sign CHIC 020. The role of the bee is actually declared clearly by this rendering since it reduces the six legs to two which then can function like arms. These arms/hands work to make the bee bread and honeycomb, sometimes seen as a small dot/boss. Add to this its placement beside the triple bud in some images and it can be seen that from the very beginning the bee is presented as the hard-working creator of honey products. This presentation is magnified in the LM I scenes where the beehive and bees form a significant part of the setting for ritual observances and are used by the artist as an indicator of the cultscape. The bees are now dots emanating from the beehive on the left and rising up to the tree above or over the humans to the tree on the right. Seeing these dots as bees allows a reading of the earlier dots with wings in the MM II images as bees also. The importance of the bee to the Minoans for the pollination of their crops and the production of sweet honey can hardly be overestimated.

Not truly insects in that they are eight-legged arachnids and they lack flight, scorpions and spiders are quite a distinctive image in the early seals¹⁷. They are mostly given sole subject status and are always shown in plan as viewed from above. The scorpions have their stinging tail curved to one side and the large pincers stretched out in front. The spiders usually have their eight legs collapsed into four and may show mouth and spinneret details. Both continue to have a presence into LM I, particularly in the talismanic seals. Why choose these two particular crawling creatures? Various types of scorpion and spider can be found in Crete but, while their sting/bite can be painful it is not life-threatening. Still, both venomous creatures are endemic to Crete and might have been chosen as a motif warning of danger. However, the juxtaposition with lions in the earliest examples may indicate another link with Egypt and the east. Not only does a deadly scorpion live there; two early Egyptian kings were called Scorpion, and two goddesses were associated with scorpions and spiders¹⁸.

The butterfly and dragonfly enjoy attention in the LM I seals. Both are regularly shown in plan as viewed from above, with care taken to detail their different abdomens and different wing shapes and markings. The butterfly has sole subject status but the dragonfly joins with the butterfly to make a fluttering pair. The other artistic detail to note is the pattern of lines out from the abdomen of the butterfly. These cannot be legs but the array of lines may be an attempt by the artist to show the opening and closing of a butterfly's wings. Yet, is there more to this detailed interest in the butterfly and dragonfly other than delight in their colour and beauty and admiration for the fantastic flying ability of the dragonfly? The Minoans, as is still the case with many peoples in Europe, might have seen the emergence of the dragonfly as heralding spring and the beginning of the warmer months. Some images show the butterfly and the fluttering pair as the flying messenger *Icon*, swooping down to tell humans important tidings, as proposed in Chapter 4. It would appear that the Minoans are alive to the natural world, even to its smallest creatures. One further note should be made on the butterfly image. It is possible that some images are representations of the silk moth. The wing patterns showing a large round spot in the centre do match the markings on the two species of the silk-producing moth. Featuring this productive insect

16 See Crowley 2014a, 129-139, for a detailed discussion of bee images and of the origin of the early profile Minoan bee forms in Egyptian hieroglyphics.

17 For the symbolism of the scorpion see Banou and Davis, *METAPHYSIS*, 123-127.

18 *Leiurus quinquestriatus*, called the Deathstalker, dwells in desert and scrub lands of North Africa and the Middle East. In Ancient Egypt, two early kings of Egypt were called Scorpion and had the scorpion pictured as their name. The goddess Serket was associated with healing venomous stings and bites in her roles as goddess of nature and animals. In art she is shown as a woman with a scorpion on her head. The goddess Neith was the goddess of wisdom and creation. In art she is shown with a spider on her head in her aspect as spinner and weaver of destiny.

in art would be appropriate for a people that honour transparent silk as the prestige fabric for prestige garments¹⁹.

Birds make a strong entrance in MM II but it is in the Minoan High Art Period that the variety of species and poses indicates very real interest in their feathered friends by the Minoans. There are water birds like ducks and swans, owls, swallows and sea gulls as well as less defined swift-flighted birds. Sole subject images show them staying grounded or in flight, singly or in pairs or groups. Mating and nurturing can be deduced from the poses in some images. Humans can catch them in nets, and they are the prey of hunting cats. They are the predators when, as sea gulls, they dive to catch fish. Their power of flight allows them to assume the role of messenger to humans as they swoop down, sometimes bringing a gift in their beak²⁰. In symbolic roles they are the familiars of deities.

As we look across the surprising range of animal life shown in the seal images, we see that the emphasis is not on the naturalistic portrayal of living creatures. Certainly, naturalistic detail is there in abundance to delight the viewer but the artist strives also to give the essential characteristics of each creature and that involves the ability of the faunal body to take on different shapes as it moves. The deep geometric structuring of fauna is evident as the artist seeks to portray the essence of life²¹.

Animal Symbols: animal heads and animal with plant

With animal subjects so prevalent in the art throughout all periods it is not surprising that they are featured in symbolic roles. The earliest symbolic image is the animal head which can be shown profile or frontal, and all the main mammals – agrimi, stag, boar, hound, bull and ram – are featured in this way. The head is regularly shown as a live head, not a skull with horns, as with the hound in 6.53 and the rams in 6.104. This would suggest the head is a *pars pro toto* for the whole animal. However, it is possible that some of the animal heads refer to animals slain in the hunt or as sacrifice. This may well be the case for the animal head given a sunburst above its forehead as with the stag in 6.27 and the bull in 4.86. In Minoan High Art the bull head is shown frontal with the double axe as in 6.100 but this juxtaposition does not necessarily mean that the bull has been sacrificed using the double axe²².

The most obvious symbol, and the one that is generally overlooked, is the animal plus vegetation formula. In the individual animal depictions recorded above as animal poses and in the discussion of plant motifs in the previous chapter, we have already seen a huge number of designs where the animal is placed beside a leaf/branch/plant/tree. This pairing begins early as in the patterned arrangements of the Early Seals where the vegetation may be codified into a symbol like the triple bud. The number and prevalence of animal plus vegetation designs in all Periods signifies well-loved subjects, but are they more than a pleasing picture of an animal resting under a tree or an animal running through a landscape or bees and birds with flowers? It would appear so. The concise seal depiction of the animal and its habitat is the Minoan statement of the interconnectedness of living creatures and the environment. It is the Aegean parallel to the Egyptian celebration of the animal/plant symbiosis in the motif of life in the Nile marshes. It is the Aegean equivalent of that early and persistent motif of the Mesopotamian tradition, animals at the tree of life rendered in the antithetical group. The Minoans borrowed this motif in LB times but it did not overwhelm the animal plus vegetation motif. It seems that the Minoans had created their own iconographic formula to represent the web of life very early and it remained their chosen expression throughout their artistic floruit.

19 See the discussion on clothing in Chapter 8 below.

20 Karen Foster follows the role of birds in PHYSIS 217-226, in MNEME 608-618 and in ZOIA 83-99.

21 As discussed in the section on Beautiful Geometry and Natural Shapes in Chapter 3 above.

22 For more on the double axe see Chapter 8 below.

Fecundity and Predation

Interpretation of the animals as individuals is only part of realising their full significance. There are overarching themes like fecundity and predation which explain further their importance to the Aegeans. In the presentation of these themes the Minoan artist makes full use of the distinctive Aegean animal poses discussed above in Chapter 3.

The artist celebrates animal fecundity within the animal study theme by creating the mating, suckling and caring for young *Icons*. The mating scenes are rather rare as in 6.16 but the suckling/caring depictions begin in the Early Seal Period and continue with graphic detail in Minoan High Art. They are especially revealing of the tender attention of the mother to her young as in 6.17, 6.18, 6.29 and 6.82 where both wild and domesticated mammals are seen in delightful vignettes. Fecundity is also celebrated in the realm of fantastic creatures with examples of lions and griffins²³.

Predation is presented through the animal attack theme where the aggression of the predator and the agony of the prey are graphically portrayed. The artist has created nine *Icons* to render the savage reality of the attack sequence. The powerful predator is seen stalking, chasing, holding at bay, crunching, seizing, carrying the catch and feeding on the catch while the terrified prey is seen distressed and contorted. The theme begins in the Early Seal Period, and by MM II we have the hound developed as predator and the agrimi as quarry/prey as in 6.56 and 6.57. In Minoan High Art the hound continues as predator as in 6.83 and 6.84 and is joined by the cat with its prey as birds as in 6.88 to 6.90. Even the bird can become a predator diving for fish as in 6.153. The animal attack is also played out with the lion and griffin as grand predators that have the endemic wild and domesticated animals as prey: the agrimi, stag, bull and ram²⁴. In the best animal attack compositions the violence of the scene is conveyed by the speed of the predator in the flying gallop and its aggression by the crunching down into the prey's backbone or seizing up into its belly or genitals. The terror and vulnerability of the prey is conveyed by the contorted pose, the head tossed back with open mouth and protruding tongue. The animal attack scenes have always been considered an identifying feature of Aegean art and they give us some of the most striking images of all.

Signature Animals: Agrimi, Hound and Bird

The wild agrimi is the spirit of the forest, the signature animal of wild nature. All this is conveyed in the deities which are identified by its form. The Agrimi Lady as in 6.20 and 1.11 and the Agrimi Lord as in 6.21 have the agrimi as their familiar. The Agrimi Mistress and Agrimi Master have the agrimi as attendants in their antithetical group composition²⁵.

The Minoans' love affair with their faithful hounds begins early and runs through all Periods. In nearly all examples the hound wears a collar, thus always alerting the viewer to its master. The early sole subject examples show a hound with tail up and mouth open with tongue lolling out as in 6.49 to 6.51. Within the limitations of these early seals we can see the artists portraying a pet wagging its tail in greeting or panting heavily as it comes in tired from the chase where it has ever been at its master's side. There seem to be two types of hound, a heavy-set animal and one of slimmer proportions. The early depictions suggest a mastiff type like the Molossian hound known from Classical times while the slender greyhound shape is regularly shown later. All the above comments on forest animals as quarry are applicable when the hound is the co-hunter with its master. It, too, is fleet of foot and so can catch the agrimi or stag and bring it down with the predator's tactics of seizing up into the belly/genitals or crunching down on the backbone. It can hold the quarry at bay as in 6.73 and enjoy the tid-bits as the hunter deals with his dead catch as in 6.84. When the quarry is the boar, the hunter needs his trusty hound more than ever in the close-quarter ambush as in 2.35. The Minoans' love for their hounds is

²³ See Chapter 10 below.

²⁴ For the significance of the cross-over between the exotic and fantastic and the endemic see Chapter 10 below.

²⁵ These four deities are discussed in Chapter 12 below.

also manifest in the detail given to later sole subject images of slender hounds where they are shown twisting, scratching, playing, and as bitches suckling their pups. It is not surprising then that the hound appears in symbolic statements giving us the images of deities. The Hound Lady and Hound Lord have the hound as their familiar. The Hound Mistress and Hound Master have the hound as attendants in the antithetical group composition²⁶.

The messenger bird is the signature creature of the air. The many sole subject illustrations of the bird testify to its importance to the Minoans. There are other creatures with the capacity for flight and these, too, are featured in the iconographic repertoire. Birds, bees, butterflies and dragonflies encompass a benevolent vision for the human. Providing food, heralding spring and witnessing the beauty and variety of the natural world, these winged creatures must have been a source of wonder to the Aegeans, as they still are to us. The bee is ever present for its importance in providing honey and being the great pollinator. Yet, it is the bird and the butterfly and dragonfly as the fluttering pair that are given a special role as messengers in the kneeling the boulder *Icons* where I have proposed that they are giving early warning to an observant human of impending earthquake disaster. Their mastery of the air must have linked them to the gods who also were known to arrive on high, travelling through the airy firmament. So, of all the winged creatures it is the bird which sums up most clearly the capacity for flight and the freedom that it brings. The bird fuses with the female human to create the birdwoman, one of the most frequently used hybrid human forms. Significantly, as familiar and as attendant, birds identify the Bird Lady where their wings carry her aloft and the Bird Mistress where they surround her²⁷.

The Ceremony of Animal Sacrifice (Plates 6.181 to 6.192)

From the earliest seals the images of animal sacrifice are displayed as in 6.181 to 6.190, regularly with one animal, sometimes with a pair. The *Icon* of animal sacrificed clearly shows the animal with crossed legs indicating the sacrifice is either about to happen or has just happened. The animals in 6.181 to 6.183 are likely to be agrimi with their short tails, and calves with their long tails in 6.187 and 6.188. As no horns are shown to help animal identification, all appear to be juveniles. The animals in 6.184 to 6.186 are clearly boars, identified by their distinctive shape, two with back bristles showing. By the time of Minoan High Art a fully grown bull is seen as the sacrifice and a special altar is needed for the ceremony as in 6.191 and 6.192. This is the sacrifice altar. It is of distinctive shape, long enough to hold a sizeable animal and standing on thick curved sturdy legs. Not much is made of the human action needed to perform the ceremony. The early seal 6.190 presents a three-piece image for the animal sacrificed *Icon*. A man reaches out to the trussed animal with a pointed implement between them. In the manner of depiction used in MM II design where items are separated, this would read as a server using a knife to sacrifice the animal. In the LM I-LM II damaged piece 6.192, at least two men in leggings attend to the bull in the *Icon* sacrificing on the altar.

26 These four deities are discussed in Chapter 12 below.

27 The birdwoman is discussed in Chapter 11 below and these two deities in Chapter 12 below.

Comparisons with Images in Other Media

1. Gold jewellery in the shape of two bees holding a honeycomb from Mallia.
CM, Plate 13, Below.
2. Faience reliefs of animals suckling.
CM, Plate 71.
3. Rhytons in the shape of bull heads from Knossos, Zakros and Mycenae.
Stone Rhyton from Knossos, CM, Plate 98.
Chlorite Rhyton from Zakros, FLL, Plate 205.
Silver and Gold Rhyton from Mycenae, NM, Plate 23.
4. Two gold cups showing the capture of bulls from Vaphio.
NM, Plates 21 and 22.
5. Hounds attacking a boar in the Hunt Fresco at Tiryns.
AP, Plate 70.

Plates 6.1 to 6.192

Forest Animals

Forest Animals – *Early Seal Period*

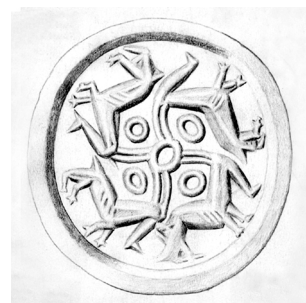
agrimi



6.1 – agrimi
(II.1 64b/EM III-MM IA)



6.2 – agrimi
(II.1 268a/EM III-MM IA)



6.3 – agrimi
(II.1 382a/EM III-MM IA)



6.4 – agrimi
(II.5 263/MM II)

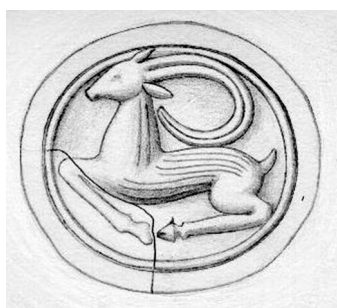


6.5 – agrimi distressed
(II.2 272a/MM II)

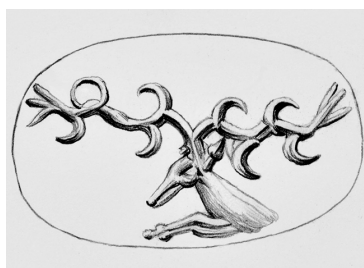


6.6 – agrimi head
(II.2 125c/MM II)

stag

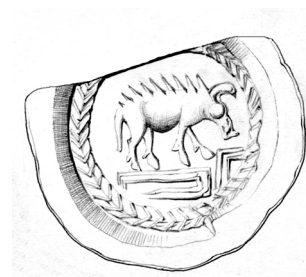


6.7 – agrimi
(II.5 254/MM II)



6.8 – stag protome
(VI 97a/MM II)

boar



6.9 – boar
(II.1 64d/EM III-MM I)

boar



6.10 – boar
(II.2 88a/MM II)



6.11 – boars
(XIII 79a/MM II)



6.12 – boar head
(II.2 213a/MM II-MM III?)

Forest Animals – Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art

agrimi



6.13 – agrimi
(II.8 375/MM III-LM I)



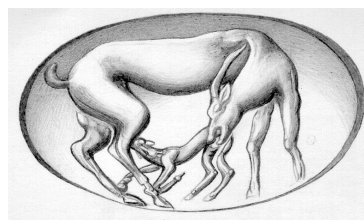
6.14 – agrimi
(VI 178/MM III-LM I)



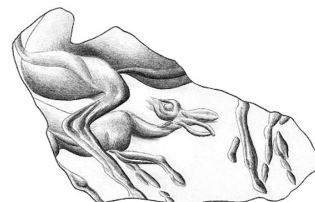
6.15 – agrimi distressed
(I 242/LB I-LB II)



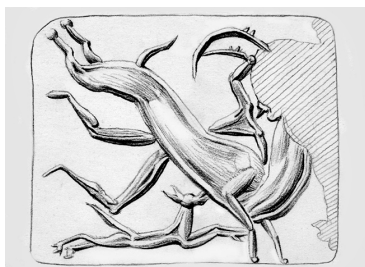
6.16 – agrimia mating
(VII 68/MM III-LM I)



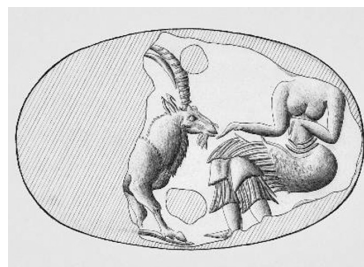
6.17 – agrimi suckling
(VS 1A 157/LM I)



6.18 – agrimi caring
(II.8 508/LM I)



6.19 – agrimi, hunter, hound
(VI 179/MM III-LM I)

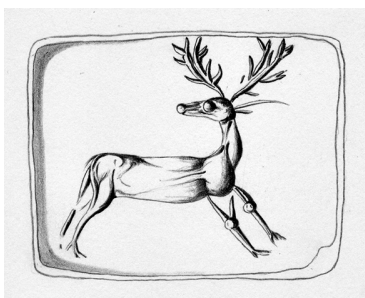


6.20 – Agrimi Lady
(II.6 30/LM I)



6.21 – Agrimi Lord
(VS 1B 88/LB I-LB II)

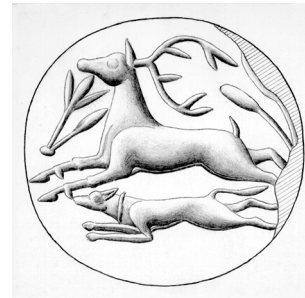
stag



6.22 – stag
(VII 67/LB I-LB II)



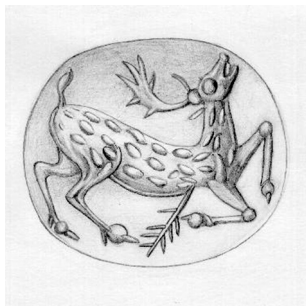
6.23 – doe suckling
(I 13/LB I)



6.24 – stag, hound
(I 363/LB I-LB II)

Forest Animals – Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art (cont.)

stag



6.25 – stag
(II.3 74/LB I-LB II)

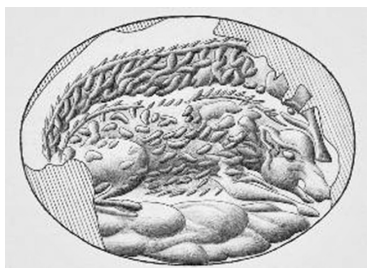


6.26 – stag
(I 41/LB I-LB II)

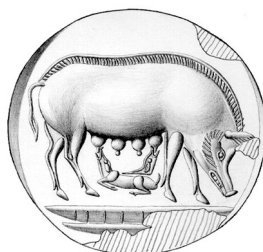


6.27 – stag head, sunburst
(II.6 271/LM I)

boar



6.28 – boar
(II.6 72/LM I)



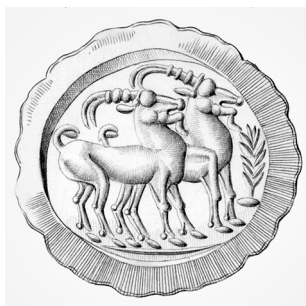
6.29 – sow, piglets
(VS 1B 60/LB I-LB II)



6.30 – boar, hunter
(I 227/LB I-LB II)

Forest Animals – Legacy and Late Periods

agrimi



6.31 – agrimia
(I 45/LB IIIA)



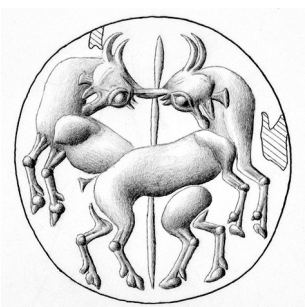
6.32 – agrimi, hound
(VI 400/LM IIIA1)



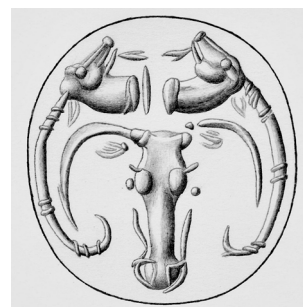
6.33 – agrimi, hunter, hound
(V 656/LB IIIA1-LB IIIA2)



6.34 – agrimia, tree of life
(I 266/LB IIIA1)



6.35 – agrimia, staff
(III 509a/LM II-LM IIIA1)



6.36 – animal heads
(VI 448/LB II-LB IIIA1)

Forest Animals – Legacy and Late Periods (cont.)

agrimi



6.37 – Agrimi Lady
(VS 1B 261/LM IIIA1-LM IIIA2)

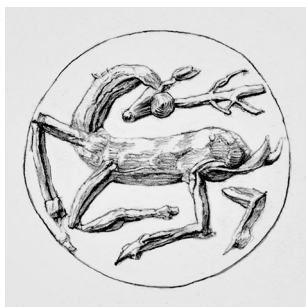


6.38 – agrimi chariot
(VI 285/LB II-LB II)



6.39 – Agrimi Master
(I 163/LB IIIA1-LB IIIA2)

stag



6.40 – stag
(VI 452/LM IIIA1-LM IIIA2)



6.41 – stag
(V 665/LB II-LB IIIA1)



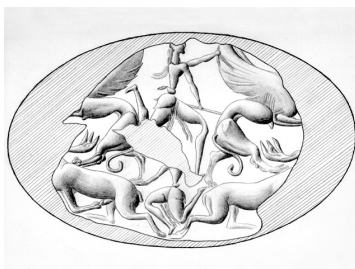
6.42 – stag, griffin
(III 375/LM II-LM IIIA1)



6.43 – stag, genius
(III 369/LM II-LM IIIA1)

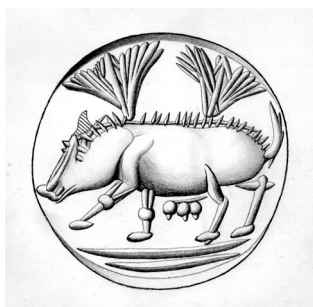


6.44 – Stag Master
(V 594/LB II-LB IIIA1)

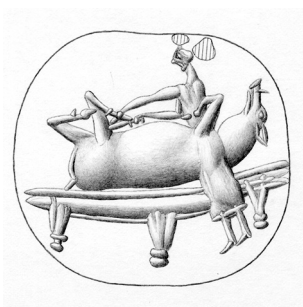


6.45 – Stag Master
(I 324/LB II-LB IIIA1)

boar



6.46 – sow
(VS 1B 117/LB II-LB IIIA1)



6.47 – boar sacrifice
(I 80/LB II-LB IIIA1)



6.48 – boar, hunter
(XII 240/LB II-LB IIIA1)

Domesticated Animals

Domesticated Animals – *Early Seal Period*

hound



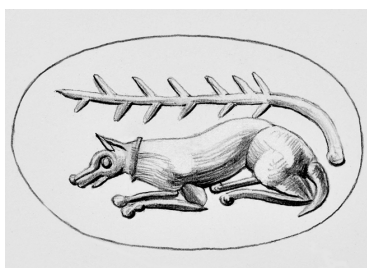
6.49 – hound
(II.1 77/EMIIMMIA)



6.50 – hound
(II.1 427c/MM II)



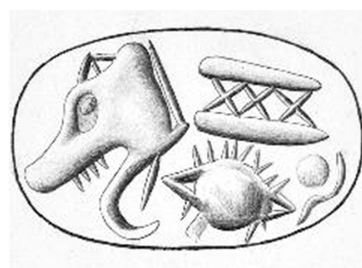
6.51 – hound
(XI 122c/MM II)



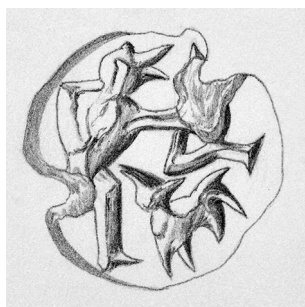
6.52 – hound
(VI 97b/MM II)



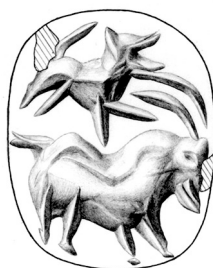
6.53 – hound head
(II.5 300/MM II)



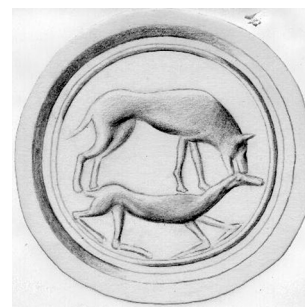
6.54 – hound head
(II.8 75/MM II)



6.55 – hound, hunter, bow
(VIII 12/MM II)

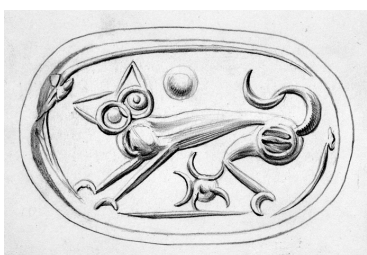


6.56 – hound chasing
(III 179a/MM II)



6.57 – hound crunching
(II.5 284/MM II)

cat



6.58 – cat
(VII 45c/MM II)



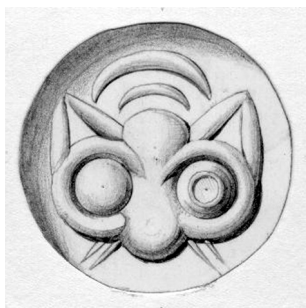
6.59 – cat, lily flower
(VI 138/MM II)



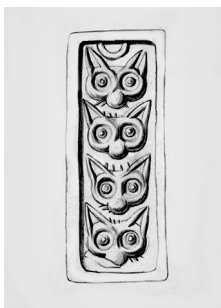
6.60 – cat, hieroglyphics
(VI 93a/MM II)

Domesticated Animals – Early Seal Period (cont.)

cat



6.61 – cat head
(II.2 3/MM II)

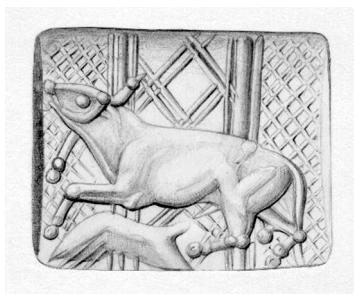


6.62 – cat heads
(VI 100a/MM II)

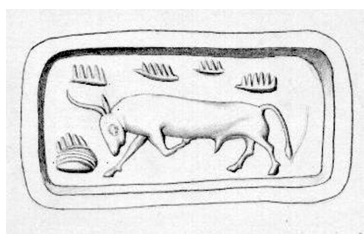


6.63 – cat heads
(II.8 90/MM II)

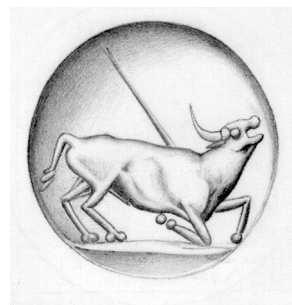
bull



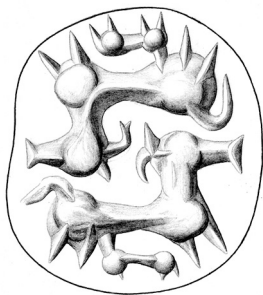
6.64 – bull, wickerwork
(II.3 238/MM II-MM III)



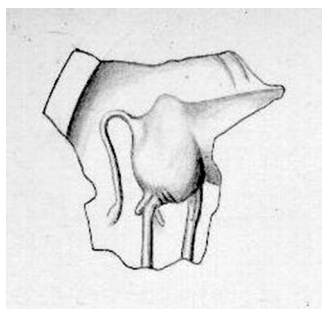
6.65 – bull
(II.5 269/MM II)



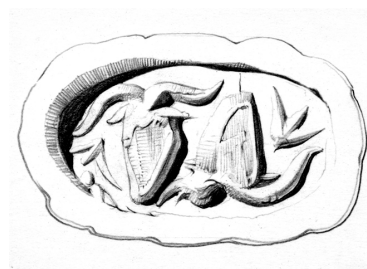
6.66 – bull distressed
(II.2 60/MM II-MM III)



6.67 – cow suckling
(III 191a/MM II)



6.68 – cow
(II.5 267/MM II)



6.69 – bull head
(II.1 145b/MM II)

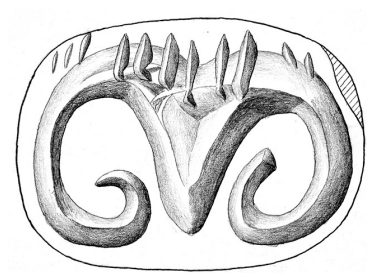
ram



6.70 – ram
(XII 35c/MM II)



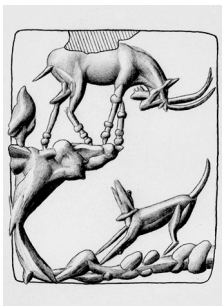
6.71 – ram, wickerwork
(XII 136/MM II-MM III)



6.72 – ram head
(III 159a/MM II)

Domesticated Animals – Experimentation Period

hound



6.73 – hound, agrimi
(VI 180/MM III-LM I)

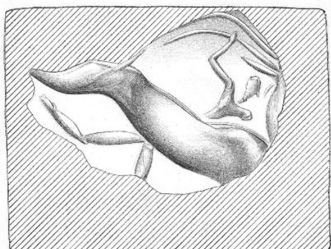


6.74 – hound, agrimi
(II.8 353/MM III-LM I)

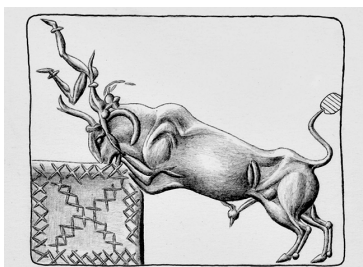


6.75 – Hound Lord
(II.8 236/MM III-LM I)

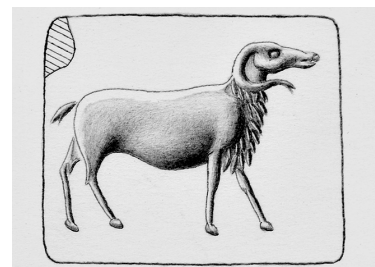
bull



6.76 – bull, hunter
(II.8 235/MM III-LM I)



6.77 – bull, leaper
(VI 181/MM III-LM I)

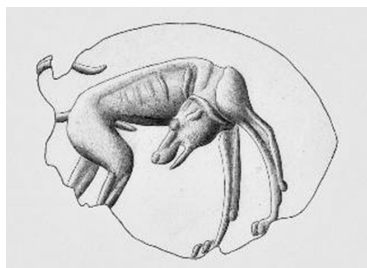


6.78 – ram
(VI 177/MM III-LM I)

ram

Domesticated Animals – Minoan High Art

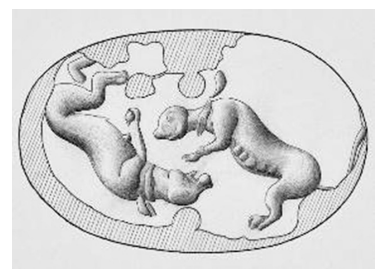
hound



6.79 – hound reverse twist
(II.6 75/LM I)



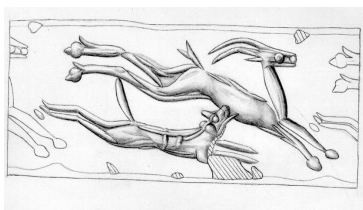
6.80 – hound scratching
(V 677a/LM I)



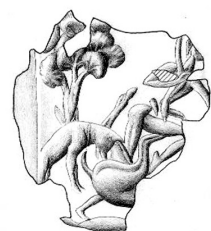
6.81 – hound puppies playing
(II.6 78/LM I)



6.82 – suckling, caring
(VII 66/LB I-LB II?)



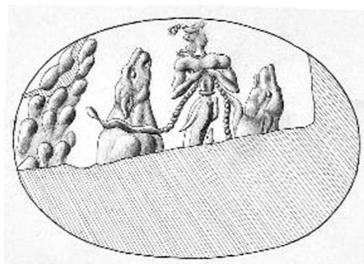
6.83 – hound, agrimi
(VS 1B 190/LM I)



6.84 – hound, hunter
(VS 3 400/LM I)

Domesticated Animals – Minoan High Art (cont.)

hound



6.85 – Hound Master
(II.8 248/LM I?)

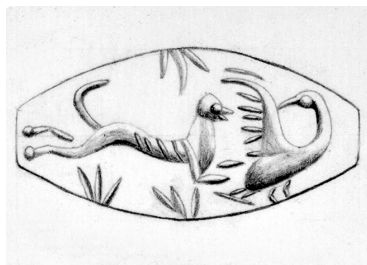


6.86 – Hound Lord
(VI 325/LB I-LB II)

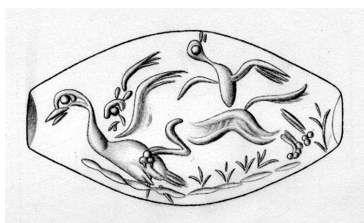


6.87 – Hound Lady
(VS 1B 58/LB I-LB II)

cat



6.88 – cat stalking
(IS 75/LM I)



6.89 – cat crunching
(II.3.172/LM I)

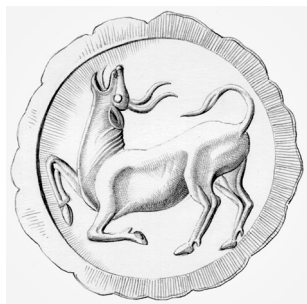


6.90 – cat seizing
(VI 367/LM I-LM II)

bull



6.91 – bulls resting
(II.8 491/LM I)



6.92 – bull distressed
(I 234/LB I-LB II)



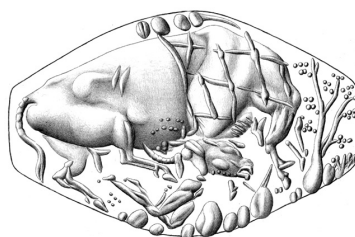
6.93 – cow suckling
(VI 454b/LB I-LB II)



6.94 – bull, lion
(II.7 101/LM I)



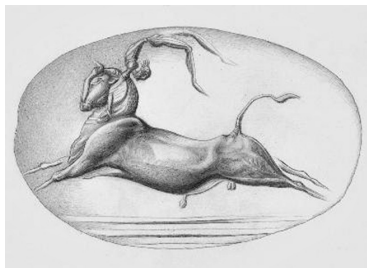
6.95 – bull, hunter
(II.6 37/LM I)



6.96 – bull, hunter
(I 274/LB I-LB II)

Domesticated Animals – Minoan High Art (cont.)

bull



6.97 – bull, leaper
(II.6 162/LM I)

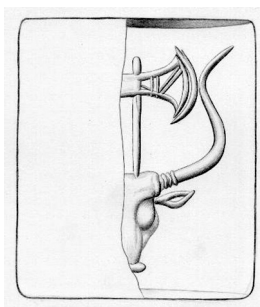


6.98 – Bull Lord
(VII 102/LB I-LB II)

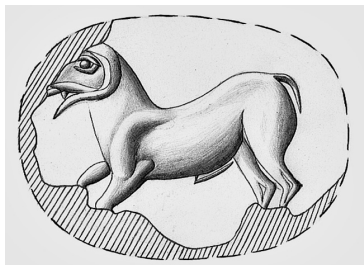


6.99 – Bull Lord
(VI 305/LB I-LB II)

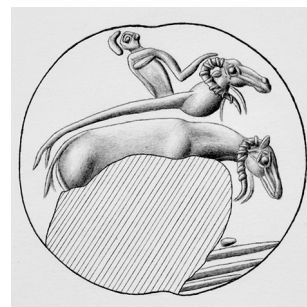
ram



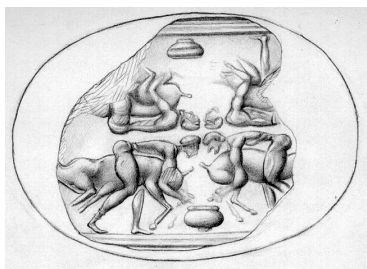
6.100 – bull head, double axe
(II.3 11/LB I-LB II)



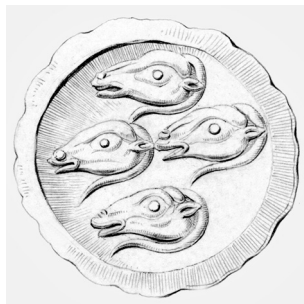
6.101 – ram
(II.7 55/LM I)



6.102 – rams, herder
(VI 330/LB I-LB II)



6.103 – milking ewes
(VS 1A 137/LM I)



6.104 – ram heads
(I 257/LB I-LB II)

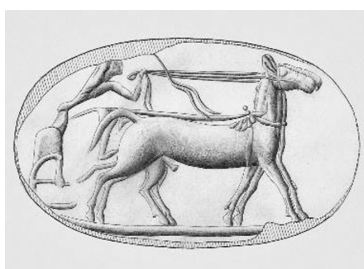


6.105 – Ram Mistress
(I 221/LB I-LB II)

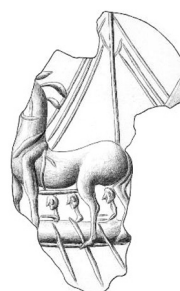
horse



6.106 – horse chariot
(I 15/LH I)



6.107 – horse chariot
(II.6 19/LM I)



6.108 – horse, ship
(II.8 133/LM I-LM II?)

Domesticated Animals – *Legacy and Late Periods*

hound



6.109 – hound, agrimi
(II.8 339/LB IIIA1?)



6.110 – hound , hunter, lion
(I 165/LB IIIA)



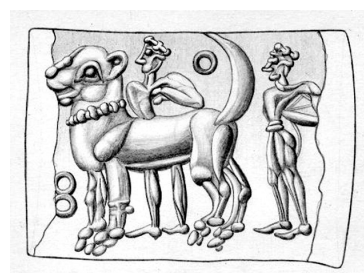
6.111 – hounds, altar, sunburst
(II.8 326/LB IIIA1)



6.112 – Hound Mistress
(II.8 254/LM IIIA1)



6.113 – Hound Master
(II.3 193/LB IIIA1-LB IIIA2)



6.114 – Hound Lord
(II.3 52/LB II-LB IIIA1)

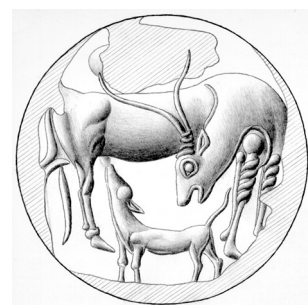
bull



6.115 – bull
(I 52/LB II-LB IIIA1)



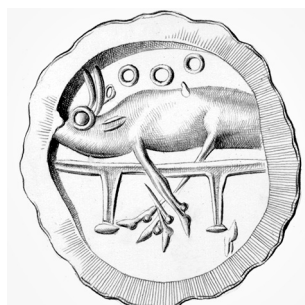
6.116 – bull, griffins
(VI 395/LB IIIA1-LB IIIA2)



6.117 – cow suckling
(I 376/LB II-LB IIIA1)



6.118 – bulls, leaper
(V 597/LB IIIA1-LB IIIA2)



6.119 – bull sacrifice
(I 203/LB IIIA1)

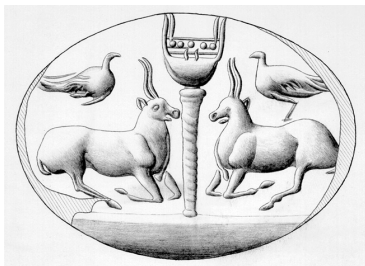


6.120 – bull head
(II.8 220/LM II-LM IIIA1)

The Life of Animals

Domesticated Animals – *Legacy and Late Periods (cont.)*

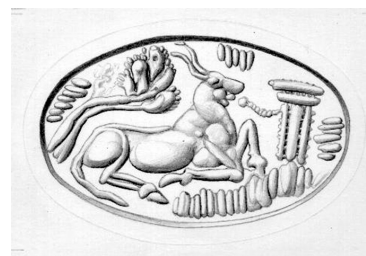
bull



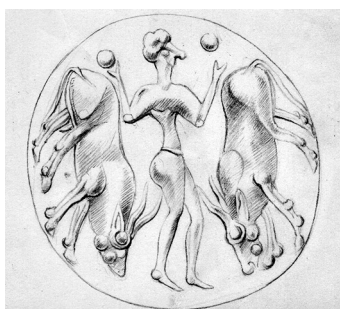
6.121 – bulls, grand pillar
(I 19/LB II-LB IIIA)



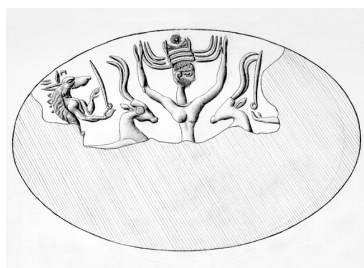
6.122 – bull, ram
(I 53/LB II-LB IIIA1)



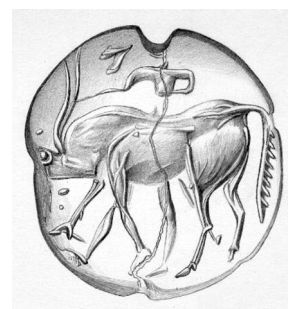
6.123 – bull tethered
(V 198/LM II-LM IIIA1)



6.124 – Bull Master
(VIII 147/LB IIIA1)



6.125 – Bull Mistress
(I 379/LB II-LB IIIA)

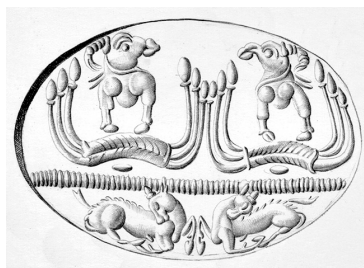


6.126 – Bull Lord
(X 259/LM II-LM IIIA1)

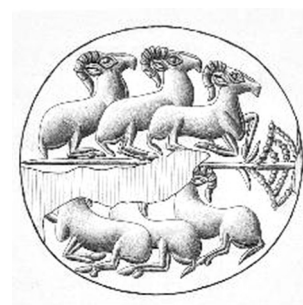
ram



6.127 – ewe suckling, herder
(VI 327/LB II-LB IIIA1)



6.128 – rams, horn bows
(I 189/LB II-LB IIIA1)

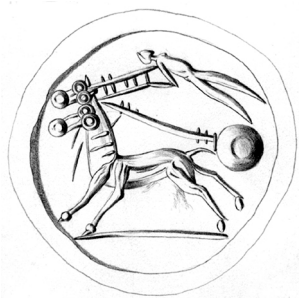


6.129 – rams, tree of life
(II.8 521/LB II-LB IIIA1)

horse



6.130 – horse chariot
(VII 87/LB II-LB IIIA1)



6.131 – horse chariot
(IV D37/LM IIIA1?)

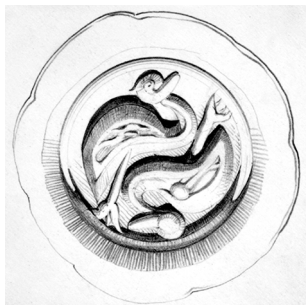


6.132 – horse
(VS 1B 14/LH IIIA2-LH IIIB)

Birds and Insects

Birds and Insects – *Early Seal Period*

bird



6.133 – water bird
(II.1 414/MM II)

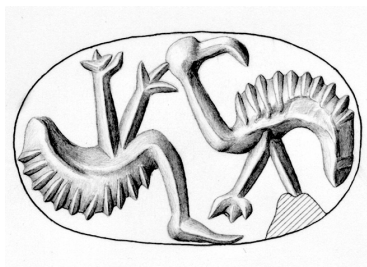


6.134 – bird
(II.2 43/MM II)

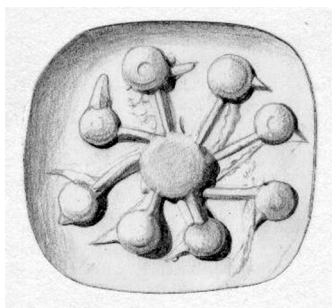


6.135 – bird, owl
(VI 130/MM II)

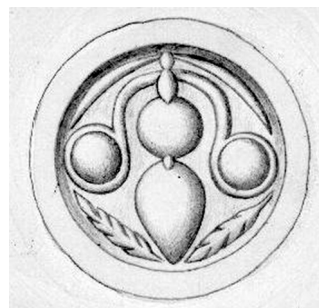
Butterfly Insect



6.136 – birds
(III 168b/MM II)



6.137 – bird heads
(II.2 274b/MM II)



6.138 – butterfly
(II.5 303/MM II)

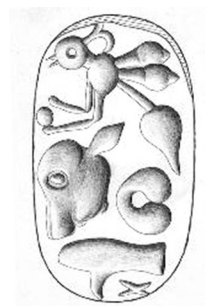
bee



6.139 – bee, triple buds
(II.5 314/MM II)



6.140 – bee, hieroglyphs
(XII 109a/MM II)



6.141 – bee with honeycomb
(II.8 80/MM II)

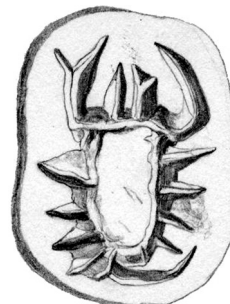
scorpion



6.142 – scorpion
(II.1 248b/EM II-MM IA)



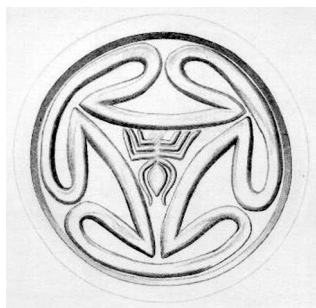
6.143 – scorpion, lion
(II.1 223a/EM III-MM IA)



6.144 – scorpion
(XII 30a/MM II)

Birds and Insects – Early Seal Period (cont.)

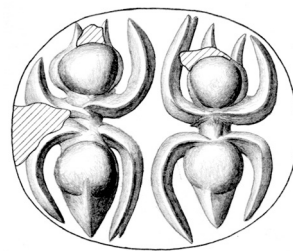
spider



6.145 – spider
(V 57/EH II)



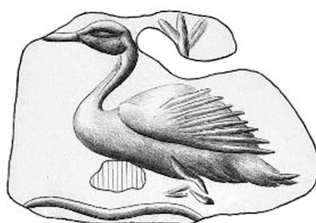
6.146 – spider, lion
(II.1 248a/EM III-MM IA)



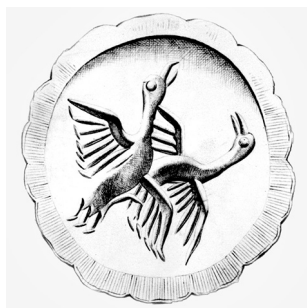
6.147 – spider
(III 172b/MM II)

Birds and Insects – Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art

bird



6.148 – water bird
(II.8 167/LM I)



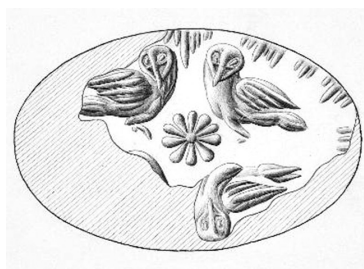
6.149 – birds
(I 151/LB I-LB II)



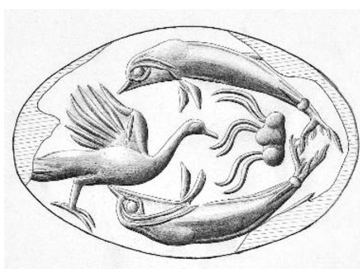
6.150 – bird
(II.6 112/LM I)



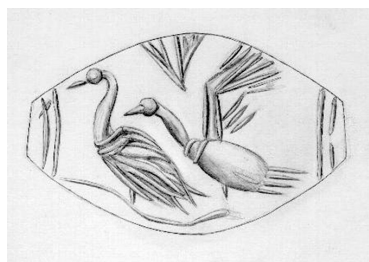
6.151 – water birds
(VI 459/LM I)



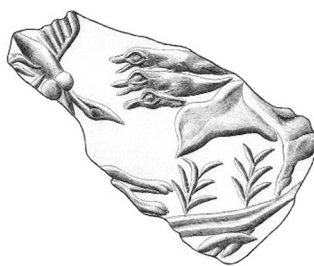
6.152 – bird, owl
(II.8 163/LM I)



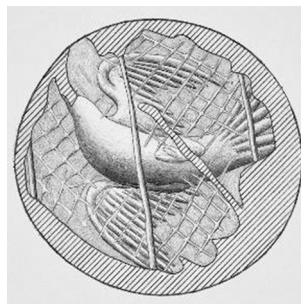
6.153 – bird, dolphin
(II.8 160/LM I)



6.154 – birds
(II.3 250/LB I-LB II)



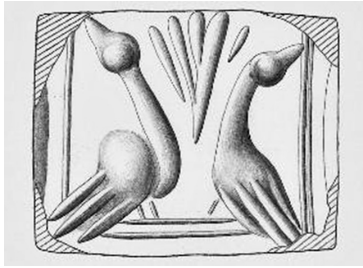
6.155 – bird, chicks
(II.8 370/LM I)



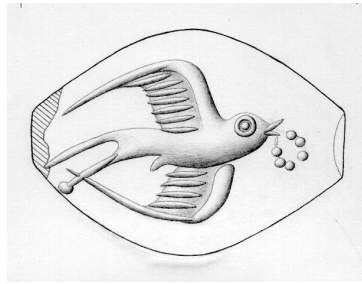
6.156 – bird netted
(II.6 123/LM I)

Birds and Insects – Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art (cont.)

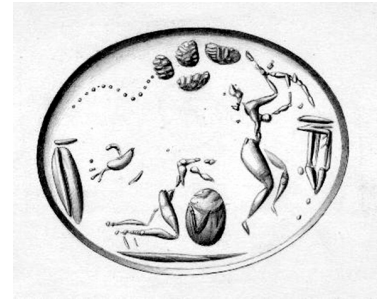
bird



6.157 – birds, tree of life
(II.6 116/LB I-LB II)



6.158 – bird messenger
(VS 1A 337/LM I?)



6.159 – bird messenger
(II.3 114/LM I)

bee, beehive



6.160 – Bird Mistress
(II.6 123/LB I-LB II)



6.161 – Bird Lady
(II.3 170/LM I)



6.162 – Bird Lady
(II.8 257/LM I)



6.163 – bee with honeycomb
(II.8 149/LM I)

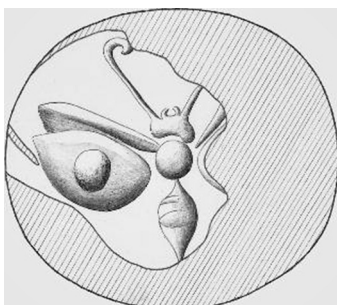


6.164 – beehive, bees
(I 219/LM I)

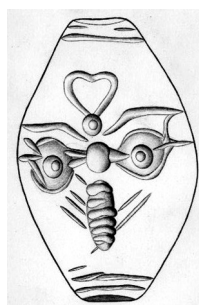


6.165 – beehive
(V 422b/LB I-LB II)

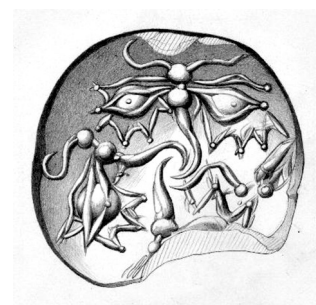
butterfly, dragonfly



6.166 – butterfly
(II.6 126/LM I)



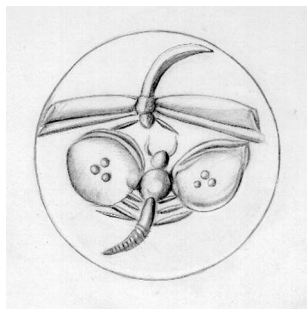
6.167 – butterfly
(II.3 46/LM I)



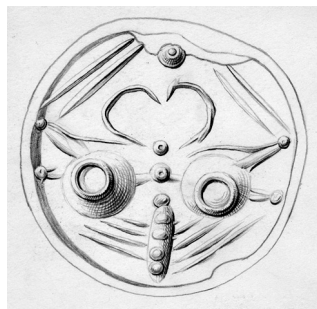
6.168 – butterfly
(II.3 22/LM I)

Birds and Insects – Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art (cont.)

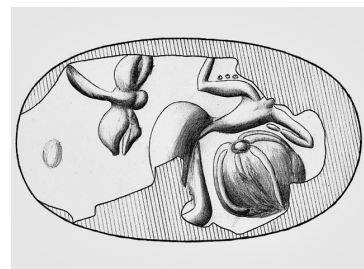
butterfly, dragonfly



6.169 – dragonfly, butterfly
(II.3 237/LM I)

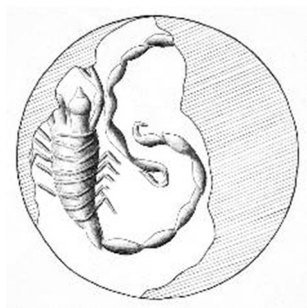


6.170 – dragonfly, butterfly
(VII 71/LM I-LM II)

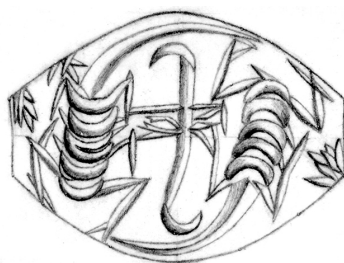


6.171 – butterfly messenger
(II.7 6/LM I)

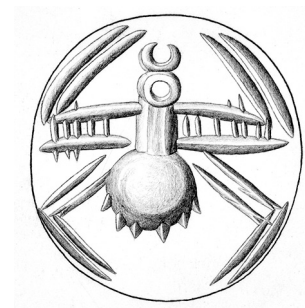
scorpion



6.172 – scorpions
(II.8 153/LM I)



6.173 – scorpions
(IS 85/LM I)



6.174 – spider
(III 289/LM I)

Birds and Insects – Legacy and Late Periods

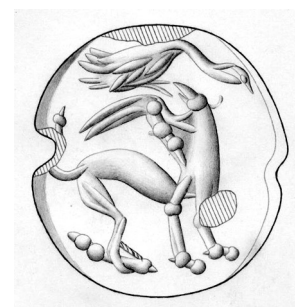
bird



6.175 – birds
(II.8 172/LM II-LM IIIA1)



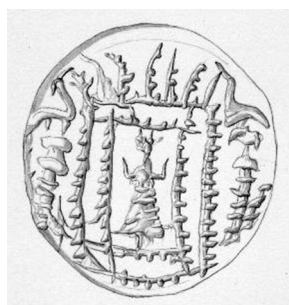
6.176 – bird, sailors
(V 184b/LB II-LB IIIA1)



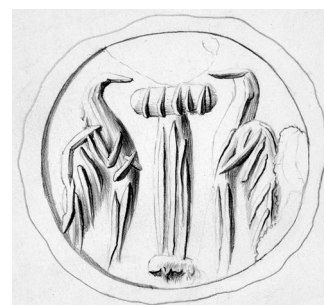
6.177 – bird, griffin
(VS 1B 101/LB IIIA1)



6.178 – birds, women
(I 191/LB II)



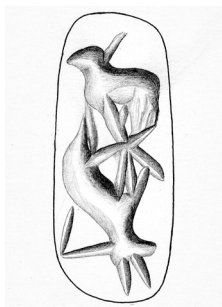
6.179 – bird, shrine
(X 270/LM II-LM IIIA1)



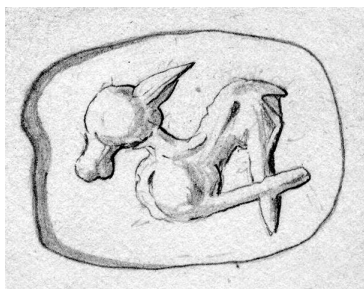
6.180 – animals at the grand pillar
(VII 187/LB IIIA1)

Iconographic Interpretation: Exuberant Life Force

The Ceremony of Animal Sacrifice



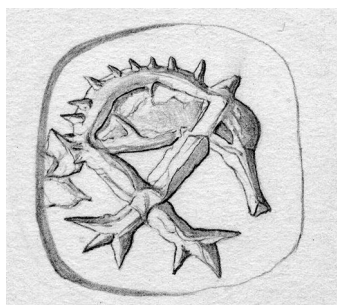
6.181 – animal sacrificed
(III 4/EM III-MM IA)



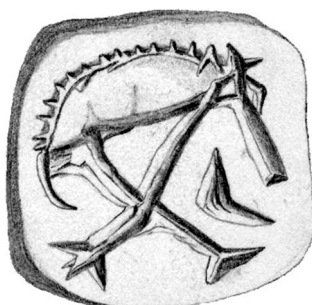
6.182 – animal sacrificed
(XIII D15c/MM II)



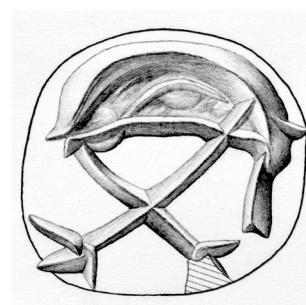
6.183 – animal sacrificed
(III 208c/MM II)



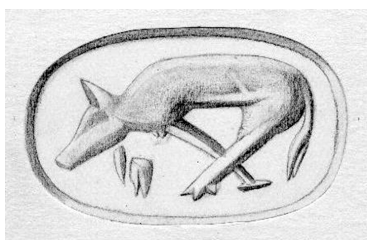
6.184 – boar sacrificed
(XIII 85a/MM II)



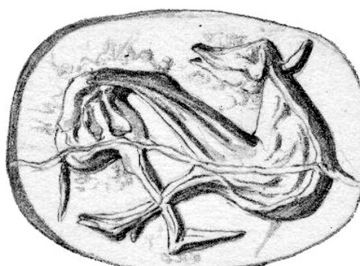
6.185 – boar sacrificed
(XII 32c/MM II)



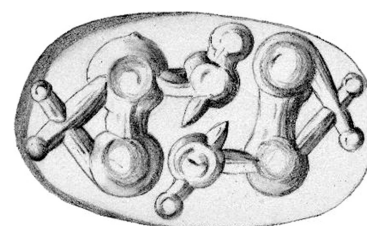
6.186 – boar sacrificed
(III 169c/MM II)



6.187 – animal sacrificed \
(II.2 143b/MM II)



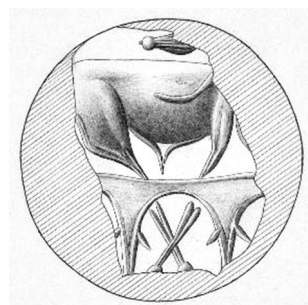
6.188 – animal sacrificed
(XII 66b/MM II)



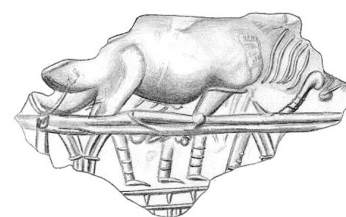
6.189 – animal sacrificed
(XII 94a/MM II-MM III)



6.190 – animal sacrificed, server
(III 213c/MM II)



6.191 – bull sacrificed
(II.8 481/LM I-LM II?)



6.192 – sacrificing on the altar
(II.8 480/LM I-LM II)

Chapter 7 The Realm of the Sea

No other set of images proclaims the Aegean artist more clearly than the creations that portray the sea surrounding their land and the creatures that inhabit it. A wide range of sea creatures can be found: cetaceans, fish, molluscs, crustaceans and shells¹.

Dolphin and Fish

Dolphin and Fish – *Early Seal Period* (Plates 7.1 to 7.15)

From the earliest times we have dolphins and fish represented. The characteristics of the dolphin are already delineated: the dorsal fin, flippers, large bifurcated tail and pointed head. Not all features are present in every example, thus leading to many animals' being identified as fish, particularly when they appear simply to be swimming along as in 7.1 to 7.4. However, during MM II, the characteristic leaping pose is worked into the depiction and the pointed head develops its "beak" as in 7.5 and 7.6. By the end of the period two dolphins leap above a waveline as in 7.7, exhibiting all the speed and vitality that becomes their hallmark. In the EM depiction 7.1, dolphins accompany a ship, and this is continued in the MM II image 7.4. In 7.3 a pod of dolphins swirls around chasing a bait ball, all contained within a dentate border. In 7.5 the dolphin is paired with a bird and in 7.6 a dolphin is placed with hieroglyphs. For fish, the earliest examples are also sometimes not very clear because of the contemporary limitations of cutting and shaping the design as in 7.8. However, by the end of the period, not only is the fish shape clear but there is also the attempt at differentiation of species as in 7.9 to 7.11, particularly with the long thin fish with backbone spikes spinning around the jellyfish in 7.12. The human presence noted with the ship in 7.1 and 7.4 is made explicit in the image of a fisherman with his catch in 7.13 and the dolphin caught in a net in 7.14. Dolphins take up a symbolic role as attendants to the Master of Animals as in 7.15.

The hieroglyphic sign CHIC 019 is sourced in marine life.

Dolphin and Fish – *Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art* (Plates 7.16 to 7.33)

The earlier motifs continue to be depicted but with increasing interest in detail². In 7.16 dolphins display all their body characteristics while in the fragments 7.17 and 7.18 wavy lines indicate their skin colours. Dolphins now are seen as very active. In 7.16 two dolphins cavort beside their jellyfish meal. In the seascapes of 7.19 and 7.20 dolphins dive down to flash past seaweed. A fish is paired with birds in 7.21, the juxtaposition reminding us that the sea is often home to gulls hunting fish. Minoan High Art gives us some of the gems of fishy portraiture as seen in 7.22 to 7.27 where the detail of individual species is clear. They may just swim along in sole subject images with the artistic focus on each individual or they may weave through a seaweed seascape as in 7.22 or may swirl around a sea urchin as in 7.24.

1 Search the IconAegean Database in the Element field on dolphin, fish, flying fish, octopus, squid, argonaut, crab, sea urchin, shell and triton. Search the IconAegean Database in the *Icon* field on dolphin leaping, fish swimming and flying fish skimming.

Search the IconADict Database for the definition of each term or refer to IAS.

2 The analysis of the talismanic seals by Onassoglou, CMS B2, records both fish and dolphins under the motif *Fisch-Motiv*, 154-163, LVI-LXII. This is a large group.

However, the most brilliant addition to the finny repertoire at this time is surely the flying fish. Whether it is all activity as in 7.25, skimming the waves as in 7.26 or as a single beautifully drawn creature as in 7.27, the flying fish becomes a favourite subject at this time, as artists strive to show its changing shape as it speeds over the sea in virtual flight. In a very fine seascape in 7.30 a huge fish captures an octopus, biting down on its vulnerable head. The circling of hunting dolphins is seen again in this period as in 7.28 and 7.29. The dolphin continues in symbolic roles, as attendant identifying the Dolphin Mistress and as familiar identifying the Dolphin Lady and Dolphin Lord as in 7.31 to 7.33³.

Dolphin and Fish – *Legacy and Late Periods* (Plates 7.34 to 7.36)

Examples of dolphins and fish are much reduced in number and variety in the iconographic repertoire. Dolphins are seen with an octopus in 7.55. Symbolic roles continue for the dolphin. A group of seals with a bull as main motif now adds a dolphin beside as in 7.34. A bullman encircles a leaping dolphin of reduced size in 11.44. A Dolphin Master is shown in 7.35 and a Dolphin Mistress in 7.36 and 7.84.

Octopus and Squid and Other Sea Life

Octopus and Squid – *Early Seal Period* (Plates 7.37 to 7.45)

The octopus and squid make their entrance somewhat later than the dolphin and fish but are well-ensconced in seal design by the end of the Early Seal Period. The octopus is shown in 7.37 to 7.39 as a specimen with tentacles curling out from the bulbous body. There is no strict observance of the number of tentacles as the correct eight and the eyes may or may not be indicated. The squid is also shown as a specimen with tentacles coming out from a bulbous body but it is differentiated by having a more slender body which is pointed at the base and shorter tentacles with the shortest two springing out straight as in 7.40 and 7.41. An early fisherman holds an octopus in his circular net in 7.42. Attempts are also made to depict other sea creatures. In 7.43, a dolphin and a bird are shown with three small circular shapes and another elongated shape. This may well be the first example of the jellyfish. In 7.44 the amorphous shape in the centre may also be a jellyfish or perhaps a bait ball. The most detailed depiction of jellyfish is seen in the later MM II example 7.12. In 7.45, what looks like a turtle hatchling moves through a seaweed seascape.

Octopus and Squid – *Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art* (Plates 7.46 to 7.54)

The tentacled two are more popular than ever. The octopus waves its arms in natural freedom in 7.46 and 7.47 although later it forms a tamed array in 7.48. With the octopus and squid we see the popularity explode in renditions on talismanic seals as in 7.49 to 7.51⁴. The quick rendition of curving tentacles by placing the hollow drill at an angle to the seal face can explain the look of these cephalopods in seal designs but it cannot explain the bursting interest in the subject⁵. In 7.53 and 7.70 the octopus is placed with a sea urchin and in 7.30 it is the prey of a great fish. A particularly beautiful rendition of the fisherman with his catch is seen in 7.54. Note the detail of the octopus with bulging eyes and suckers on the tentacles.

Octopus and Squid – *Legacy and Late Periods* (Plates 7.55 to 7.57)

Continuing on from the previous Period, the octopus is seen with dolphins in 7.55. In the later design in 7.56 the octopus with arrayed tentacles is barely recognisable. In 7.57 the octopus is shown with a

3 These three deities are discussed in Chapter 12 below.

4 Onassoglou, CMS B2, records the octopus and squid motifs as *Oktopus-Motiv*, 68-74, XXVII, and *Sepia-Motiv*, 57-67, XXI-XXVI.

5 See the discussion on the treatment of the octopus tentacles in Minoan Art Styles in Chapter 3 above.

bull, bird and genius. The partnering of bull, sea creature and fantastic being can be compared with that in 7.34 of the dolphin with the bull and in 11.44 of the dolphin with the bullman.

Argonaut, Crab, Sea Urchin, Shell and Triton

Argonaut, Crab, Sea Urchin, Shell and Triton – *Early Seal Period* (Plates 7.58 to 7.63)

The crab is known from MM II where it is already shown in plan as viewed from above in the detailed depiction of 7.58. The eight legs spring out symmetrically from the round body while the pincers are stretched out in front. Its mode of depiction is a close parallel to that of the scorpion. The early seal 7.59 is usually called a geometric design but makes more sense when seen as a shell⁶. The tritons of 7.60 to 7.63 present both aspects of the animal which were to endure throughout the art: the triton as a live sea creature with the eating radula of the mollusc extended; and an empty triton shell. The triton is the sea animal seen nestled in the seaweed of 7.61. The triton in 7.62 appears to be only the shell as the opening for the radula is clearly empty and this shell is placed within branches of the type usually placed within double horns. The triton of 7.63 sits within a waveline indicating its origin in the sea and has six points emanating from the opening, possibly an indication of the serrated radula of the mollusc within. In 7.60 the triton with radula extended is seen with hieroglyphs.

Argonaut, Crab, Sea Urchin, Shell and Triton – *Minoan High Art* (Plates 7.64 to 7.81)

The argonaut now joins the sea creatures already in the iconographic repertoire. Argonauts are pelagic octopuses and the characteristics chosen for depiction are the spiral shell and three of the eight tentacles placed curling above it⁷. The two argonauts seen in 7.64 are riding on a waveline to identify their sea habitat. The argonaut is again seen in 7.65 with a bird and a butterfly, both depicted in profile, and in 7.66 with a profile butterfly. The argonaut sails along on the crest of the waves in imitation of life in 7.64 but its association with birds and butterflies is harder to understand. The crabs⁸ of 7.67 and 7.68 now have eyes on stalks but show less care with the number of legs (a problem also with scorpions and spiders). In 7.69 the head and pincers are repeated six times in a radiation pattern that would be at home in the early seal designs. In 7.70 to 7.72 and in 7.28 and 7.53 the sea urchin is placed within a grouping of sea creatures, an octopus or dolphins, or in a seascape of seaweed. The sea urchin is always shown as a circle with many spines radiating out. In 7.73 to 7.75 and in 7.16 we see various rounded shapes, some having thread-like appendages that can be identified as jellyfish, thus continuing the motif from the earlier period. Their depiction with dolphins and birds is particularly apposite as they provide food for both creatures. The shells in 7.76 to 7.78 are the common bi-valve type and appear not to be in their watery habitat but arranged in patterns dividing the circle in three or four sections. The shells in 7.79 are in the shape of the useful murex although they are less spiky than in nature⁹. In 7.80 and 7.81 the tritons are live with their radula extended even though the two in 7.80 are patterned in a pair.

Argonaut, Crab, Sea Urchin, Shell and Triton – *Legacy and Late Periods* (Plates 7.82 to 7.84)

The variety and expressive detail of sea creatures is gone. The few examples have a symbolic import. The double argonauts of 7.82 form a linear pattern like a dado below heraldically posed lions and griffins. In 7.83 a woman server stands beside a curved altar and holds a triton up to her face. With no radula shown, it is likely that it is only the shell. The carefully delineated Dolphin Mistress in 7.84 wears a headdress that is a live triton with radula extended.

6 Both the CMS text and Arachne describe a rhombus or diamond with one half hatched but the modelling would indicate imitation of a natural form.

7 This is the female *Argonauta argo* with its egg case, so thin-shelled that it has given rise to the popular name, paper nautilus

8 Onassoglou, CMS B2, records the crab motif as *Krabbe-Motiv*, 74-78, XXVIII

9 The murex family of predatory sea snails produce the deep purple dye so valued in the ancient world.

Iconographic Interpretation: Wonderful Sea Creatures

What are we to say about this amazing sea world and its denizens? The Minoan examples and their import are discussed below. The interpretation of the Mycenaean repertoire is found in Chapter 14.

The sea and its creatures are long-standing and cherished subject matter in Minoan art and, as we have seen, there is more to these images than simply a record of what is out there beyond the shore. We can attest that interest in the sea and its creatures begins very early with dolphin images and even a shell. This interest quickens so that by the end of MM II the repertoire has expanded to include various fish types, the triton, the intervention of humans as fishermen and the first Dolphin Master image. In Minoan High Art the repertoire continues to expand, gathering in octopus, squid, crustaceans and jellyfish, as well as symbolic VIP images.

The Minoan artists were fascinated by sea creatures and registered this fascination by creating detailed images of their favourites. There is no doubt that all the sea creatures provided a rich source of food, as evidenced in the images of fish in nets and of fishermen. Yet, is there a deeper source of Minoan fascination with the high seas? Understandably, the Minoans must have wished to depict the watery realm that wrapped their island, seeing it as a characteristic of their Minoan identity, since no place is very far from the sea in Crete. Perhaps they also saw the sea as a protector, keeping away other peoples who could not understand their ways. Certainly, the detail of the images shows the Minoans' concern to record their experience of the denizens of the deep. Sometimes the images are linearised or patterned, but many are so accurate regarding the biology of the creature and its behaviour that one suspects the artist is working from first-hand knowledge. Some of the detail may be attributed to being able to observe sea creatures closely by peering into tide pools or by standing on the shore looking out to sea or by observing the catch while waiting to put it in the cooking pot. However, for the "action shots", particularly of the predation scenes, knowledge gained from actually viewing the creature in their own high seas habitat would seem to have been necessary. Do we then have seal artists who at other times in their lives were seafarers, experiencing the sea from the vantage point of their ships? Did the Minoans see a quality in all the sea creatures that they found particularly exciting? Dolphins can leap, flying fish can "fly" and argonauts can ride over the waves apparently untrammelled by the constraints imposed on land-based animals. Fish can dart so swiftly beneath the water that they are difficult to see and even harder to catch. The octopus and squid exhibit a fluidity of shape that allows them mysterious movement. Sea creatures might have been particularly cherished because of their "absolute mobility" in living in the watery medium.

Sea Creature Symbols: the triton and the triton shell

The use of sea creatures as symbols is much more restricted than with land animals, but the triton and the triton shell do feature in significant roles, both iconographically and as an item used by humans. The triton is seen either in its natural state alive or as a shell. In its natural state, the live mollusc is present and can extend its radula, which is the organ for predation and devouring prey. In these images the triton is part of the natural world, of the sea world, and it can sit within a seascape. It is seen as a powerful creature behaving in its characteristic way which links it into the predator/prey theme. In the other rendition the triton is only the shell. The radula is absent and the opening from which it emerges is clearly shown as an oval hole. Here, it is obviously the shell of the triton creature and is shown with a different range of associated images. Branches are placed beside the upright triton shell, branches similar to those surrounding double horns of cult significance¹⁰. The Mediterranean triton, *Charonia lampas*, has distinctive colourings on the shell and on the ridges forming the curve where the radula emerges. In 7.63 the triton shell is the sole subject placed upright to exploit the vertical nature of the oval seal face and references its natural habitat in the surrounding waveline. However, for the six points in an

¹⁰ See the discussion on double horns in Chapter 8 below.

arc at the top there may be an alternative interpretation to the radula explanation. Here, the points are rather small for the radula and are not actually extruding from the shell. Indeed, these points frame the empty hole at a distance while pointing outwards. Could this be an attempt by the artist to indicate sound coming from the shell? Shells like this can be blown to emit a distinctive sound and are so used in various communities today. The triton shell, known as a cult item, may easily be the means of calling worshippers to a shrine or marking the important point in a ritual.

Predator and Prey

We saw earlier that a favourite theme of land animal behaviour is the animal attack where animals play out the roles of predator and prey in a sequence of nine icons created to give full expression to the aggression and terror of the event. The same theme is present with the creatures of the sea where the dolphin, large fish, sea birds and triton take the role of predator, while fish, octopus and jellyfish assume the roles of prey. A variety of action scenes records the predation. Dolphins drive fish into a bait ball, all creatures revolving in a great swirl as in 7.28 and 7.29. The accuracy of this depiction is now more easily appreciated by the modern-day viewer who is also acquainted with film documentaries which record the dolphins' predatory attack. The dolphins first drive the fish into the bait ball and then dive through and seize their targeted fish. It is as if we can join the Minoan artist and can see from the ship above the first act of this sea attack sequence. The artist depicts the driving of the fish as the most characteristic form of dolphin predation and delivers a striking image of whirling power¹¹. Here again is evidence of the Minoan recognition of a deep pattern in nature, this time not static geometry but that of violent movement in swirling water. Dolphins hunt their other favourite food, jellyfish, where they are shown leaping around but not actually biting into their prey. Could this be a rendition of the oft-seen dolphin behaviour where they toss the jellyfish up in the air as if playing ball with them? Birds linked to fish and dolphins are seen from MM II, as in 7.5, 7.21, 7.43 and 7.74, and such images remind us that gulls are also predators known for feasting on fish. The bird, dolphins and jellyfish trio is also seen in 6.153. Contrast the role of the sea birds as predators with that of the land birds which are prey. However, the juxtaposition of the sea bird with dolphins may also record another piece of dolphin playful behaviour where they have been seen to grasp the legs of birds and pull them under, only to let them go. When a huge fish is the predator as in 7.30, it bites down deep into a large octopus in a crunching *Icon*, the action taking place in a seascape delineated by the surrounding wateredge motif. The triton, when live, shows its radula extended ready to capture its prey but is not seen actually smothering and devouring its meal.

Signature Sea Creature: Dolphin

There is one sea creature above all others that captures the essence of the sea and that is the dolphin. It is regularly seen in its natural environment, swimming, leaping and diving. Its power and agility in slicing through the waves of the high seas is obviously appreciated by the artists and presented to us in various ways. It is featured as the great predator at the top of the food chain. Its relationship with humans is revealed in the many images of dolphins accompanying ships. Indeed, the imaging of the relationship between Minoans and sea creatures begins with the dolphin and ship nexus and remains one of the leitmotifs of art until the end. Dolphins cavorting beside a ship create a memorable image, as anyone who has sailed the Mediterranean and enjoyed their company can testify. Then there are the tales of dolphins befriending sailors. The dolphin plays a full role in identifying certain VIP deities in Minoan High Art, providing familiars for the Dolphin Lady and the Dolphin Lord and attendants to the Dolphin Mistress and Dolphin Master. The VIPs are given sole subject focus and, in all these representations, the dolphin is vitally alive, being shown in characteristic pose leaping up or down. A particularly sensitive rendition of the dolphin familiar comes in 7.33 where it leaps down behind its Lord in the classic identifying position behind the VIP. It is particularly important to note that these images as

11 If Minoans had had access to underwater cameras I am sure that we would have been given displays of the second act where the predator dolphins dive through the bait ball to seize their catch.

VIP attendant and familiar show the dolphin alive. They are to be contrasted with the fisherman images of carrying the catch where the sea creature is dead. So, the dolphin, as the embodiment of the sea and its power, comes to be the identifier of the sea gods also.

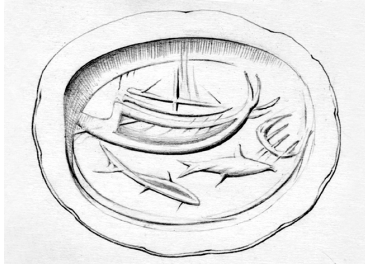
Comparisons with Images in Other Media

1. Lifesize alabaster model of a triton shell from the palace at Knossos.
FLL, Plate 208.
2. Seascapes with fish, octopus, argonauts, sea urchins and shells in LM IB Marine Style pottery designs.
FLL, Plates 29 to 32, 212 and 213.
3. The Dolphin Fresco in the Palace at Knossos.
AP, Plate 31.
4. Gold clothing ornaments in the shape of octopuses from Grave IV, Mycenae.
CM, Plate 204 above.
5. The octopuses and dolphins on the gold repousse bowl from Dendra.
CM, Plates 196 Below and 197.

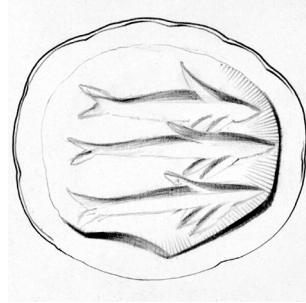
Plates 7.1 to 7.84

Dolphin and Fish

Dolphin and Fish – *Early Seal Period*



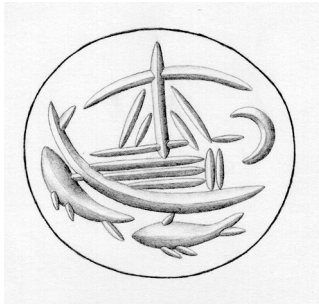
7.1 – dolphin, ship
(II.1 287b/EM III-MM IA)



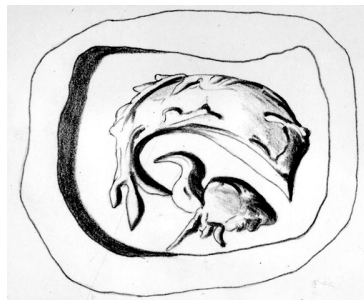
7.2 – dolphins
(II.1 446b/EMIII-MM IA)



7.3 – dolphins
(II.6 155/MM I-MM II)



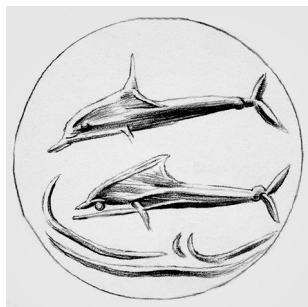
7.4 – dolphin, ship
(VS1A 330a/MM II-MM III)



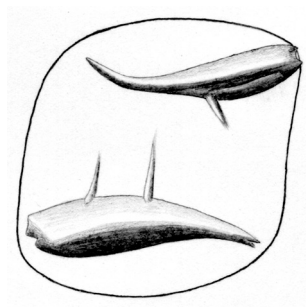
7.5 – dolphin, bird
(VII 209c/MM II)



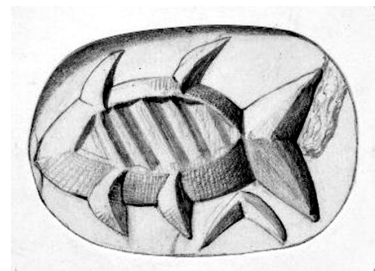
7.6 – dolphin, hieroglyphics
(II.6 229/MM II)



7.7 – dolphins
(VI 156/MM II-MM III)



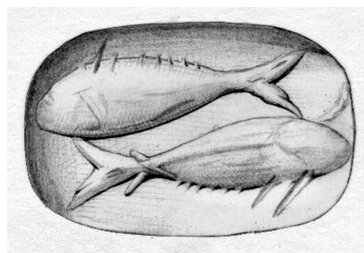
7.8 – fish
(III 37/EM III-MM IA)



7.9 – fish
(II.2 243b/MM II)



7.10 – fish
(II.2 219c/MM II)



7.11 – fish
(II.2 261a/MM II)



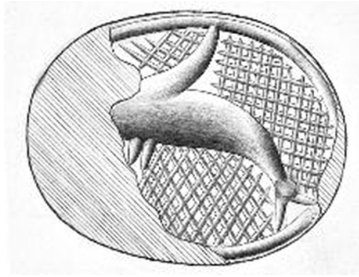
7.12 – dolphin/fish, jellyfish
(XI 16/MM II)

The Realm of the Sea

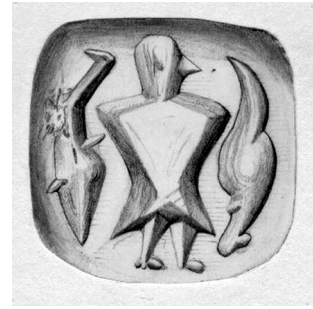
Dolphin and Fish – *Early Seal Period (cont.)*



7.13 – fisherman with catch
(II.2 174a/MM II)

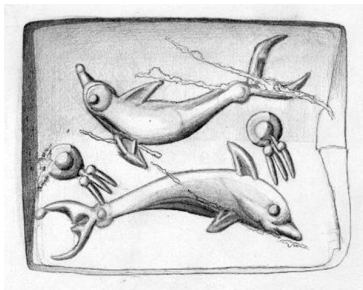


7.14 – dolphin netted
(II.8 34/MM II)

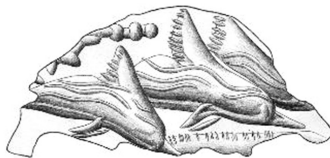


7.15 – Dolphin Master
(II.2 267b/MM II)

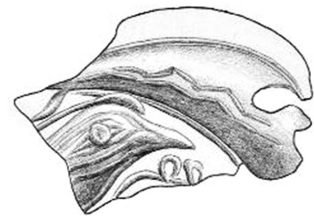
Dolphin and Fish – *Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art*



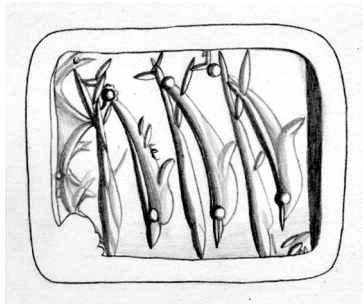
7.16 – dolphins, jellyfish
(X 313/LB I-LB II)



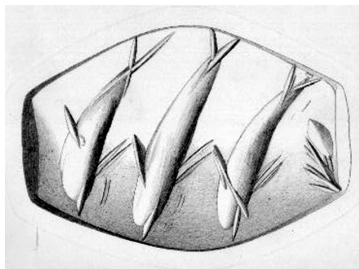
7.17 – dolphins
(II.8 161/LM I)



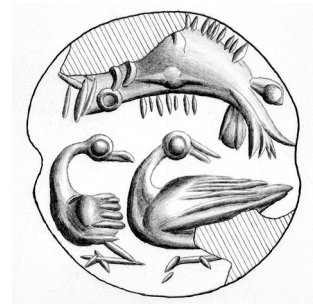
7.18 – 2 dolphins
(II.8 162/LM I)



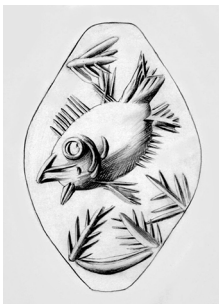
7.19 – dolphins
(IX 73/LM I)



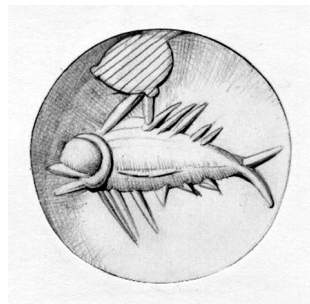
7.20 – dolphins
(V 176/LM I)



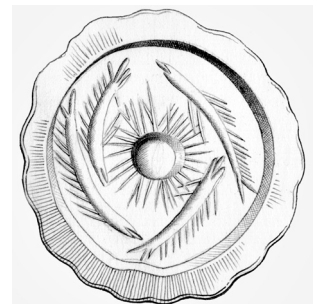
7.21 – fish, birds
(III 495/LM I-LM II)



7.22 – fish, seaweed
(VI 257a/LM I)



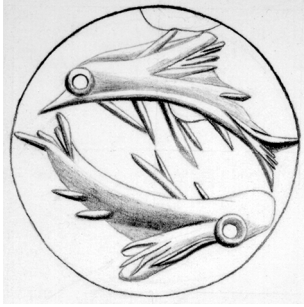
7.23 – fish
(II.3 209/LM I)



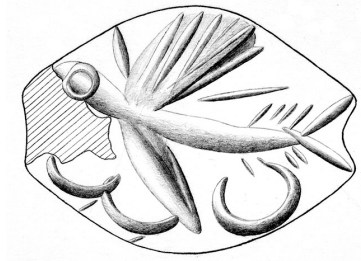
7.24 – fish, sea urchin
(I 462/LM I)

The Realm of the Sea

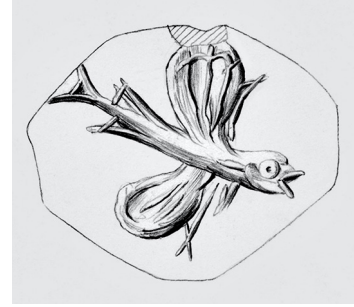
Dolphin and Fish – Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art (cont.)



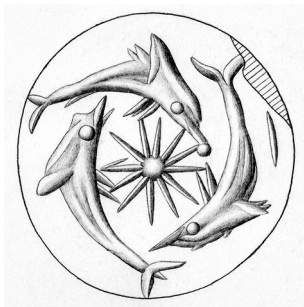
7.25 – flying fish
(IS 121/LM I)



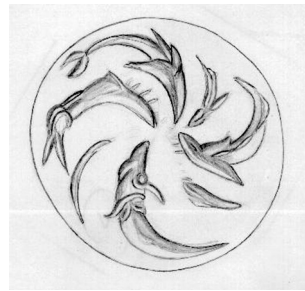
7.26 – flying fish
(III 325/LM I)



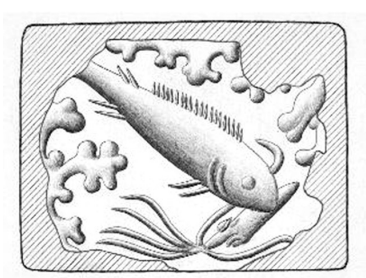
7.27 – flying fish
(VI 462/LM I)



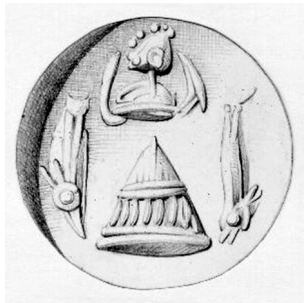
7.28 – dolphins, sea urchin
(III 497/LM I)



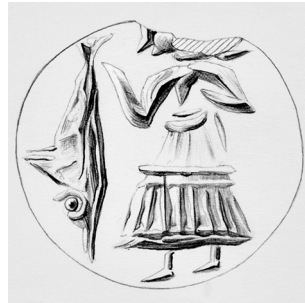
7.29 – dolphins
(II.3 75/LM I?)



7.30 – fish, octopus
(II.8 157/MM III-LM I)



7.31 – Dolphin Mistress
(VI 327/LM I)

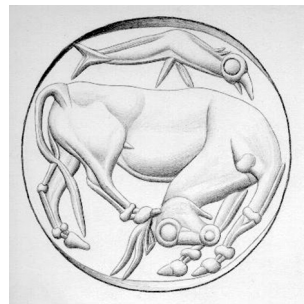


7.32 – Dolphin Lady
(VI 324/LM I)

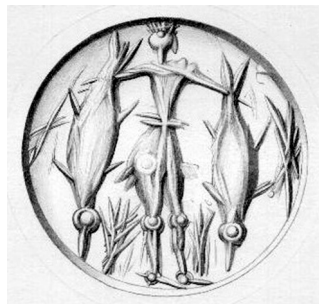


7.33 – Dolphin Lord
(II.8 258/LM I)

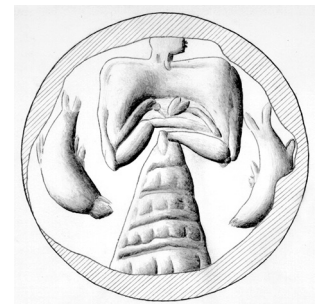
Dolphin and Fish – Legacy and Late Periods



7.34 – dolphin, bull
(II.4 161/LM IIIA1)



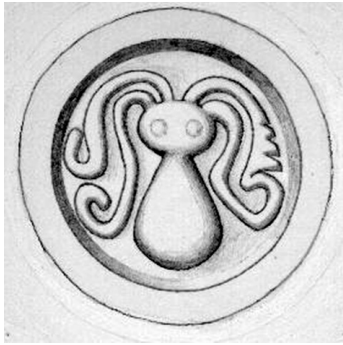
7.35 – Dolphin Master
(V 181/LB II?)



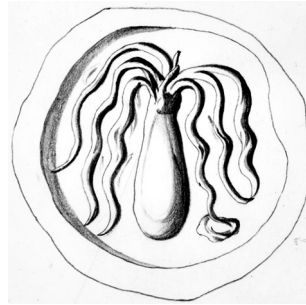
7.36 – Dolphin Mistress
(I 344/-)

Octopus and Squid

Octopus and Squid – *Early Seal Period*



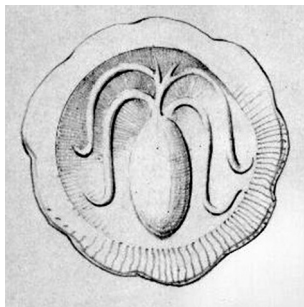
7.37 – octopus
(II.5 301/MM II)



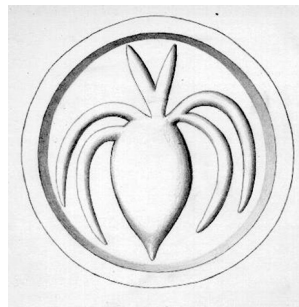
7.38 – octopus
(VII 219/MM II)



7.39 – octopus
(XII 99/MM II)



7.40 – squid
(II.5 302/MM II)



7.41 – squid
(II.5 312/MM II)



7.42 – fisherman with catch
(I 414c/MM II)

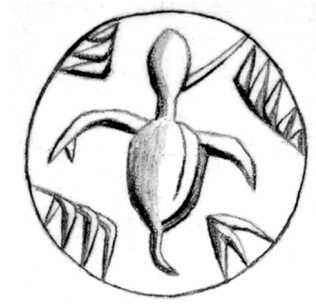
Other Sea Life – *Early Seal Period*



7.43 – dolphin, bird, jellyfish
(II.6 246/MM I-MM II)



7.44 – dolphin, fish, jellyfish
(II.1 389c/MM I)

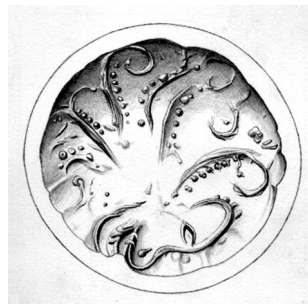


7.45 – turtle hatchling?
(IS 107a/MM II)

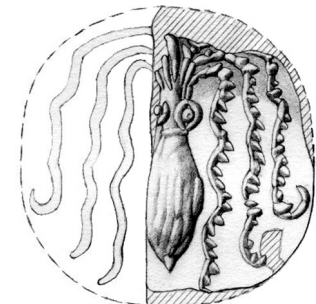
Octopus and Squid – *Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art*



7.46 – octopus
(VI 464/LM I)



7.47 – octopus
(IX D10/LM I)

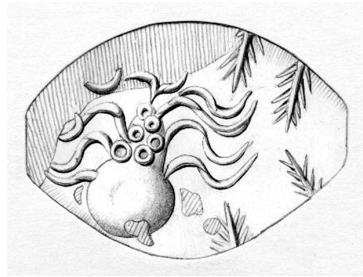


7.48 – octopus
(XI 220/LM I-LM II)

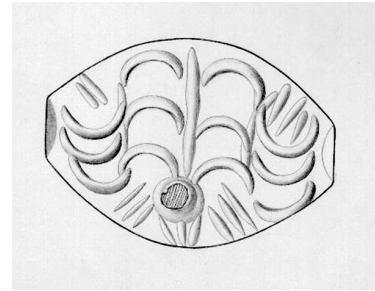
Octopus and Squid – Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art (cont.)



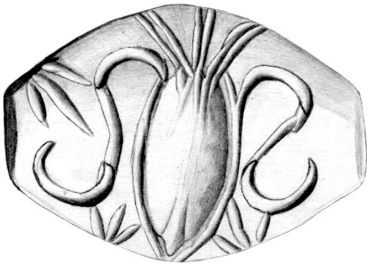
7.49 – octopus, seaweed
(X116/LM I)



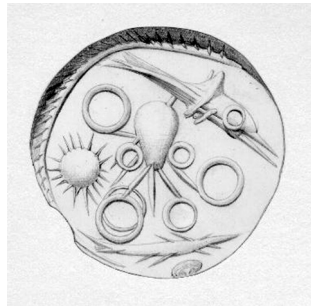
7.50 – octopus, seaweed
(II.3 42/LM I)



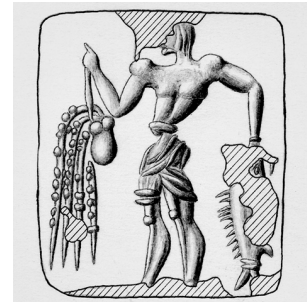
7.51 – octopus
(II.3 138/LM I)



7.52 – squid, seaweed
(X1123/LM I)

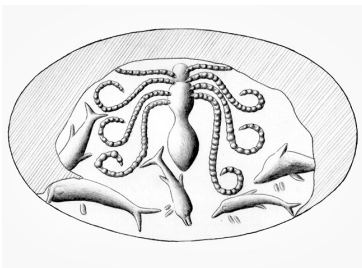


7.53 – sea life
(II.3 251/MM III/LM I)

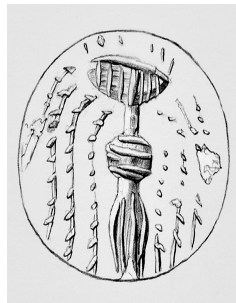


7.54 – fisherman with catch
(VI 183/MM III-LM I)

Octopus and Squid – Legacy and Late Periods



7.55 – octopus, dolphins
(I 312/LB II)



7.56 – octopus
(VI 465/LM IIIA1-LM IIIA2)



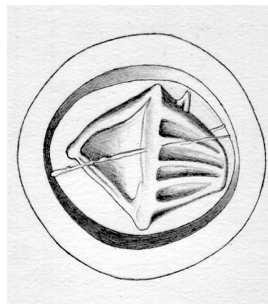
7.57 – octopus, bull
(VII 177/LB II-LB IIIA1)

Argonaut, Crab, Sea Urchin, Shell and Triton

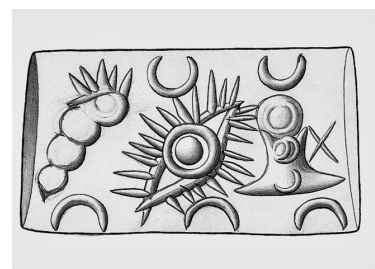
Argonaut, Crab, Sea Urchin, Shell and Triton – Early Seal Period



7.58 – crab
(VII 30b/MM II)

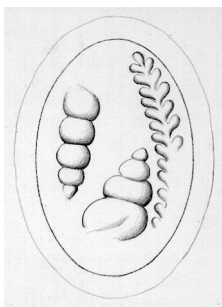


7.59 – shell
(IV 66/EM III-MM IA)



7.60 – triton, hieroglyphs
(II.7 215/MM II-MM III)

Argonaut, Crab, Sea Urchin, Shell and Triton – *Early Seal Period (cont.)*



7.61 – triton, seaweed
(II.5 306/MM II)



7.62 – triton, branches
(II.5 305/MM II)



7.63 – triton, waveline
(II.5 304/MM II)

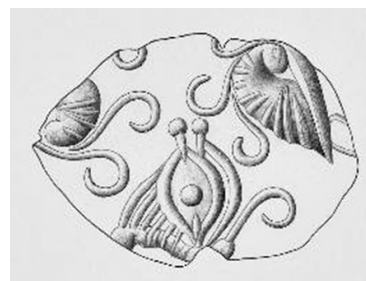
Argonaut, Crab, Sea Urchin, Shell and Triton – *Minoan High Art*



7.64 – argonaut
(II.3 91/LM I)



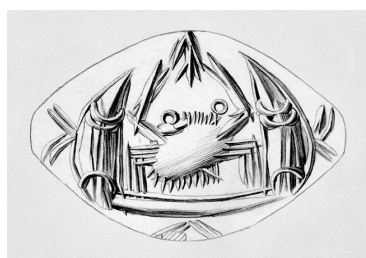
7.65 – argonaut, butterfly, bird
(VI 457/LM I)



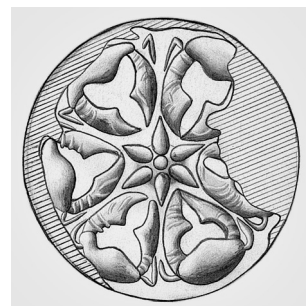
7.66 – argonaut, butterfly
(II.6 128/LM I)



7.67 – crab
(II.8 154/MM III-LM I)



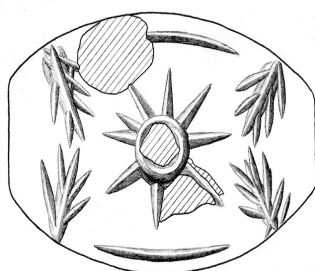
7.68 – crab
(VI 225/LM I)



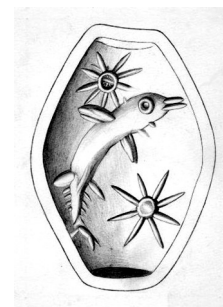
7.69 – crab
(II.7 217/LM I)



7.70 – sea urchin, octopus
(XI 1/LM I)

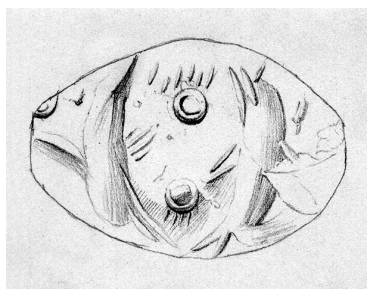


7.71 – sea urchin, sea weed
(III 347b/LM I)



7.72 – sea urchin, dolphin
(IX 71/LM I)

Argonaut, Crab, Sea Urchin, Shell and Triton – Minoan High Art (*cont.*)



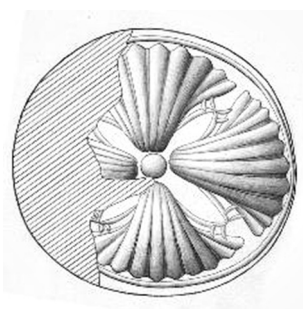
7.73 – jellyfish, dolphin
(VIII 138/LM I)



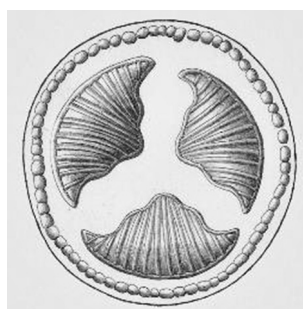
7.74 – jellyfish, bird, dolphin
(X 117/LM I)



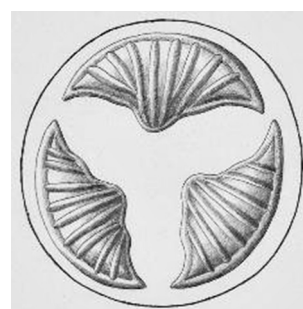
7.75 – jellyfish, dolphin
(XII 166/LM I)



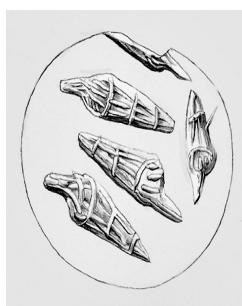
7.76 – shells
(II.8 150/LM I)



7.77 – shells
(II.6 140/LM I)



7.78 – shells
(II.6 141/LM I)



7.79 – shells
(VI 466/LM I-LM II)

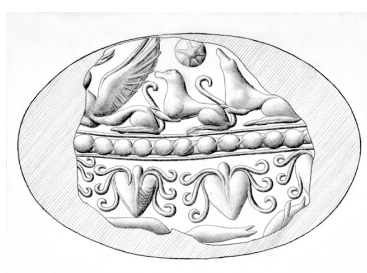


7.80 – triton
(II.8 151/LM I)



7.81 – triton
(II.8 152/MM III-LM I)

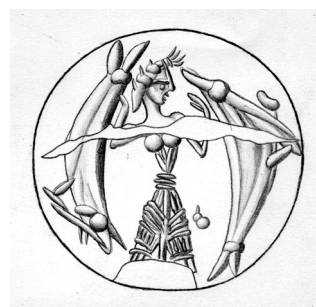
Argonaut, Crab, Sea Urchin, Shell and Triton – *Legacy and Late Periods*



7.82 – double argonauts
(I 329/LB II-LB IIIA1?)



7.83 – triton
(II.3 7/LB IIIA1)



7.84 – Dolphin Mistress
(VS 1B 116/LB II-LB IIIA1)

Chapter 8 The Constructed Environment

Images of things made by human hand appear somewhat later than those of the natural environment. The importance of the artefact is revealed through the detailed depiction of their shape and, eventually, of their surface texture. Here the items, so carefully wrought by the artisan, are divided into those that are able to be made by one person working alone and those that require several people working together to construct the finished product¹.

Vessels, Tools and Other Small Items

Vessels, Tools and Other Small Items – *Early Seal Period* (Plates 8.1 to 8.21)

In this section minor constructions are discussed. A burst of interest in these smaller artefacts becomes evident in MM II where the focus is on presenting individual items and, in most cases, the items are given sole subject focus. Various ceramic vessels – jug, flask, amphora, pithos, skyphos and ewer – appear as shown in characteristic shape in 8.1 to 8.6. In 8.4 the size of the pithos is stressed by having the small human stand beside it. In 8.6 a genius holds the ewer in a regularly occurring image. Tools such as a pole or staff, carrying pole with loads, a toothed pole, spiked pole, single axe and double axe are also depicted as in 8.7 to 8.9 and 8.19 to 8.21. The plain pole or staff which regularly accompanies a carrying pole with its loads hanging as in 8.7 is the staff used as a walking aid, both poles sometimes shown in use by male porters as in 9.7 to 9.9. The straight toothed pole as in 8.8 and the spiked pole as in 8.9 are regularly seen beside stylised men but as they are not shown being used their identity is not clear. The toothed pole is most likely the saw used to fell all those huge trees needed to construct the grand palace buildings. The saw is sometimes shown curved as in 9.2 but that is the artist simply following the seal perimeter. The single axe as in 8.19 is rarely shown but the double axe as in 8.20 and 8.21 becomes an increasingly familiar motif from MM II. Apart from pottery and workday tools, various small artefacts are shown, like animal collars, fishing nets, musical instruments, baskets and some furniture as in 8.10 to 8.17. Hounds are collared in 8.10 and 8.11 while a fish is caught in a net in 8.12. It looks like a band playing in 8.13 with drums and a syrinx as the main instruments, a lyre is shown in 8.14 and it is likely that the looped shape held by the figure in 8.15 is a sistrum. In 9.16 a male figure carries a basket and a potter sits on a stool in 8.17 holding his finished products. In 8.18 we may be seeing the earliest representation of the orb rod placed each side of a ladder or path.

1 Search the IconAegean Database in the Element field on jug, flask, pithos, amphora, skyphos, ewer, vase, carrying pole, toothed pole, spiked pole, single axe, double axe, collar, cord, net, lyre, basket, stool, orb rod, double horns, bee smoker, sailing ship, mast, stays, sail, oar, ikrion, wickerwork, bundle, panel, boat, grand boat, town houses, shrine, tree, pillar, gate, tiered, lattice, ashlar and tripartite shrine, altar, curved, table, sacrifice altar, skirt, flounced, frilled, fringed, fleecy, lappet and side-pleated as well as long pants, diaphanous, scarf, scarf knot, cape, mantle, belt, kilt, long kilt, diagonal robe, hat, horn bow, plumed, high, pointed, peaked, brimmed, flat, round and cap, bow, arrow, staff, spear, grand spear, sword, eight shield, tower shield, tusk helmet, crested helmet, cloak, cloak knot, hide apron and panoply. Search in the *Icon* field on special object and hovering symbol. Search the IconADict Database for the definition of each term or refer to IAS.

A considerable number of the hieroglyphic signs depict small and large items made by human hand. Hieroglyphic signs CHIC 042-047, CHIC 052-055 and CHIC 056-058 are sourced in tools, vases and musical instruments².

Vessels, Tools and Other Small Items – *Minoan High Art* (Plates 8.22 to 8.42)

Many of the items so prevalent in the earlier period are gone but some emerge stronger. The ewer is now joined by the vase as in 8.22 to 8.27. The ewer is shown with rounded body, beaked spout and curved handle while the vase has a rounded body, wider mouth and two curved handles. They may be shown as sole subject as in 8.24 or with appropriate creatures as with the genius in 8.22 and the monkeys in 8.23. They become a favourite subject in talismanic seals as in 8.25 to 8.27 where some ewers are given a spout and both vessels are regularly shown with branches and double horns³. Vessels are also seen being carried by, or associated with, various human figures as in scenes with the vase in 8.42. The carrying pole is shown used by human figures as in 8.111, 8.121 and 8.122 and the staff as in 8.114 and 8.115. The double axe regularly appears⁴. Bearers carry it as a special object as in 8.28. It is often presented as sole subject as in 8.29. It joins with the scarf as in 8.30 to become the double axe with scarf and thus a hovering symbol. The orb rod is held by a bearer in 8.31. This is a rod topped by one or more spheres. The motif of double horns becomes more widely used as in 8.32. If this motif did originate with bull horns, the flaring curves of bull horns are not copied in the double horns images. Rather, they take an architectural slant with a flat base and the “horns” rising up at right angles from this base. Double horns are now depicted small and large in various places, from providing a support for displays of ewers and vases to marking the tops of buildings and shrines as in 8.32, 8.66, 8.71 and 8.72. Festoons are strung beneath a table altar in 8.33. Collars, cords and nets continue to be shown. The hound in 8.34 wears a collar while a cord is used as a leash for the Lady to hold her lion familiar in 8.35 and the Lord his griffin familiar in 8.36. In these latter cases the leash turns into a collar with the tie in 8.36 ending in a beautiful tassel. Nets trap a flying fish in 8.37, a bird in 8.38 and a bull in 8.39. Note how the cord edge of the net is featured in the entrapment in 8.38 and 8.39, particularly where its curve reveals how the net halts the headlong rush of the bull, twisting its neck around. As for furniture, stools are seen again with the crossed legs of the camp stool in 8.41 and a sturdier stool in 8.42. A rare glimpse of soft furnishings is given in 8.40 where a female figure apparently sits crossed-legged on piled-up and plumped-up cushions.

Vessels, Tools and Other Small Items – *Legacy and Late Periods* (Plates 8.43 to 8.51)

Some motifs continue but in muted usage. The ewer is carried by the genius in 8.43 and a conical rhyton is added to more familiar vessels in the assemblage in 8.44. The double axe is seen in the horn bow hat of the Mistress in 8.49 and rising out of double horns set atop a bull head in 8.50. Double horns are mounted on buildings, shrines and altars as in 8.51 and 8.87 to 8.89. In contrast, the orb rod enjoys increased favour and displays various shapes. In the three renditions in 8.45 three spheres top a thick rod which terminates in a sphere with a downward spike. An alternative top is seen in 8.46 where there is only one sphere with two vertical “wings”. Cords and collars still show fine work as in 8.47 and 8.48 with the griffin and hound familiars.

Ships and Buildings, Shrines and Altars

Ships and Buildings, Shrines and Altars – *Early Seal Period* (Plates 8.52 to 8.60)

In this section we address the major constructions that require the effort of more than one individual

² CHIC, 15-16.

³ In Artemis Onassoglou's analysis of the talismanic seals, the ewer is her *kane* and the vase is her *amphora*, CMS B2, 12-22, Tafel I-IX. These two vessels comprise a large group of images.

⁴ In Onassoglou's analysis, the double axe is her *Doppelaxt*, CMS B2, 102-110, Tafel XLI-XLIIa.

to complete. Indeed, they require the co-operation of many workers. They include the various types of ships, buildings, shrines and altars. As we have already seen in 7.1, images of ships sailing the sea are known from the earliest seal designs. By MM II the sailing ship is a favourite motif showing detail of hull, mast and stays and oars as in 8.52 to 8.54. The triple bud is now a regular emblem for the prow as in 8.52, spirals are employed to suggest the moving sea as in 4.49 and 4.50 and a branch is displayed beside the ship in 5.24.

The patterns in 8.55 to 8.57 have occasioned much discussion, usually being described as “architectural” or “tectonic”. These names register the effects of man-made construction without identifying exactly what they are. The very early example 8.55 could be registering weaving patterns in material but, in view of the stronger lines in the later examples, seeing the patterns as sections of light-weight or demountable buildings makes sense. If they are buildings, what is the construction material? In rural areas, lightweight saplings, canes and large leaves are often combined in bundles and panels to form wickerwork to build simple huts and fences. The firmer materials form the framework and the post and lintel doorway while the intervening panels are filled with woven leaf materials. Describing these constructions as wickerwork at once reveals their source material and the nature of the simple, and probably non-permanent, buildings. By MM II the images show quite elaborate constructions like the post and lintel construction framing a door which is closed with a patterned panel in 8.56 and 8.57. Other patterned panels fill out the framework. Some of these images are extremely finely wrought, as with the precise design on the rock crystal 8.57, and continue into the Experimentation Period. The images in 8.58 of a ram and in 6.64 of a bull confined by a barrier or pen provide confirmation of seeing the wickerwork patterns as a building material. One other architectural feature seen at this early stage is the pillar. In 8.59 and 8.60 a single pillar stands alone without being attached to a building. One carries a decoration like a tied bow and the other sits between two sunbursts as discussed earlier in connection with example 4.83. The depiction of the pillar in isolation and/or as a sole subject underlines its significance.

Hieroglyphic signs CHIC 035-040 are sourced in buildings or parts of buildings and the ship⁵. In 8.53 the ship is the hieroglyphic script sign 040 where it is placed beside the branch script sign 029.

Ships and Buildings, Shrines and Altars – *Minoan High Art* (Plates 8.61 to 8.84)

Sailing ships continue to be shown as sole subjects as in 8.61 where full detail is given, now including the sail which was only suggested by the mast in earlier images. Ships are also shown in scenes with human figures as in 8.63. A partial ship now appears as a distinct motif, the *ikrion*, as in 8.62. This image fuses the main ship features of prow, mast, sails and *ikrion* shelter into a distinctive design which admirably fits horizontally into the (almost always) amygdaloid seal shape⁶. Another new motif is the grand boat, as in 8.64 and 4.63 to 4.65. The grand boat comprises a hull and can be adorned with special elements to prow and stern as in 4.63 to 4.65. It carries only one figure but can also carry a shrine as in 8.64, 4.63 and 4.64. Buildings are usually shown as clusters of town houses in scenes of human activity although sometimes a single edifice is depicted. In 8.65 town buildings are featured with enlarged cloak and eight shields placed before them while in 8.66 a city by the sea features several levels of buildings as well as town gates. There is continuing interest in pillars with two types now shown, both being termed grand pillars because of their importance within the composition. The first, a one only example, is the extremely tall pillar in 8.67 which is so tall it rises above the human figures and buildings and its top is not shown. It tapers towards the top, is apparently not of structural use, and is placed in a significant position before the ashlar shrine building. The other grand pillar, as in 8.68, is clearly the depiction of the structural member of a grand building with its detailed capital. However, it has been extracted from its functional position to be placed as the central symbol in an antithetical group composition with

⁵ CHIC, 15-16.

⁶ In Onassoglou's analysis of the talismanic seals, the ship is her *Segelschiff* and the *ikrion* is her *Kajütenschiff*, CMS B2, 28-35, Tafel XI-XIII.

attendant lions. In 8.69, again, the pillar with capital does not appear to be tied into a building but is placed as the identifying backdrop to a Seated Lady figure. The wickerwork building constructions known from the earlier period continue. A strong barrier constrains a bull in 8.82 while wickerwork bundles and panels become sole subject representations in talismanic seals like 8.83 and 8.84. Here the thick structural pieces are bundled and bound together by fastenings rendered as semicircles while the interstice panels are rendered by crosshatching⁷.

The images of shrines and altars become particularly important in this period as evidenced by the variety of their depiction and the number of times they feature in complex compositions. The detail accorded these constructions allows us to name seven shrines by their salient features: tree, pillar, gate, tiered, lattice, ashlar and tripartite. The tree shrine as in 8.70 and the pillar shrine as in 8.71 are named for the item featured within the shrine construction. The gate shrine as in 8.72, the tiered shrine as in 8.73 and the tripartite shrine as in 8.76 are named for the actual shape of the shrine construction. The gate shrine mimics a gateway and may be topped by double horns. The tiered shrine has tiers, usually three, reducing in size as they ascend. The tripartite shrine comprises three sections side by side, the central section being the tallest and flanked by two lower sections. The lattice shrine as in 8.74 and the ashlar shrine as in 8.75 are named for their construction material. The lattice shrine may be of wood as it gives the appearance of crossed wooden slats. The ashlar shrine is clearly constructed of courses of ashlar masonry. It is the most substantial of all the shrines and may show a doorway to the inner area as in 8.67. These seven shrines can combine various characteristics as in the ashlar tree shrine in 8.75, the ashlar tree and pillar shrine in 8.67, the tiered tree shrine in 8.73 and the tiered pillar shrine in 8.71. The double horns motif, as mentioned above, is frequently used to top shrines as in 8.71, 8.72 and 8.76. Shrines are one of the defining indicators of the cultscape and they are the focus of the serving at the shrine *Icon*.

There is a set of images which have been called rustic shrines⁸ as with the examples in 8.77, 8.78 and 5.78. However, there are significant differences between the constructions depicted in these images and the seven shrines identified above. These particular constructions are not attended by human figures and it is difficult to judge their scale. They all show vertical elements topped by a triangle which is usually hatched. They regularly have an attachment on the side in the shape of a circle, semicircle or S. Many are surrounded by wavy or curling lines. Some are accompanied by double horns and branches which give an indication of a small-scale item. Searching for a small-scale item of this characteristic shape, one comes up with a bee smoker, a standard piece of equipment for any bee keeper. Indeed, this most useful of tools for the apiarist still has the same basic shape today. A bee smoker identification would explain the attachments as handles and would be cognisant with the associated foliate motifs. It would explain the hatched triangle top as the perforated emitter of the smoke. It would also explain the waving/curling lines in 8.78 as the smoke issuing forth, as discussed earlier as the ephemeral shapes seen in 3.80 and 3.81. Identifying these constructions as bee smokers would be consistent with the needs of a Bronze Age community and would provide a complement to the images of bees and beehives already established in the iconographic repertoire⁹.

There are three altars, each shown with specific detail: curved, table and sacrifice. The curved altar has a flat base and top and incurved sides which leave a very distinct profile as in 8.79. It is sometimes placed within scenes involving human figures but more often it is the focus of an antithetical group composition where lions, hounds and griffins are the attendants. The table altar looks just like a table with a flat top as in 8.80. It may be anything from knee-high as in 8.113 to waist-high as in 8.33 and

7 In Onassoglou's analysis of the talismanic seals, these bundles are named *Fischprotomen*, *Bündel in V-Form* and *Paneel-Bündel*, CMS B2, 85-102, Tafel XXXI-XL. This is also a large group of seals.

8 Named a rustic shrine by Evans but argued against by Krsyszkowska, AS, 134. The set of images as they appear in talismanic seals was identified by Onassoglou who retained the reference to "Rustic Shrine" but named them *Humpen*, after their tankard shape, CMS B2, 23-28, Tafel X.

9 The term, bee smoker, has now been added to the Element list in the IconAegean Vocabulary and in the IconAegean Databases, and the previous term, rustic shrine, has been removed.

8.162 and may be topped by double horns. The sacrifice altar is a long low construction large enough to hold the sacrificial animal, with specially shaped sturdy legs as in 8.81 and 6.192. In almost all cases the sacrifice is depicted and sometimes also the human figure officiating. Altars are one of the defining indicators of the cultscape and are the focus of the serving at the altar *Icon*.

Ships and Buildings, Shrines and Altars – *Legacy and Late Periods* (Plates 8.85 to 8.93)

Sailing ships continue in the seal repertoire but in limited numbers. Sailors are seen aboard in 8.85 and a full ship is seen in 8.86. Town houses are not in evidence. There are somewhat more instances of shrine images including examples of tree, pillar, gate and lattice shrines as in 8.87, 8.89 to 8.91 and 9.61. The expected altar usages continue with the table altar in 8.88, the curved altar used as the focus of the antithetical group as in 8.92 and the sacrifice altar carrying the sacrificial animal as in 8.93. The grand pillar is seen in 8.91 as an appropriate place to tether the bull and as the focus of the griffin attendants in the antithetical group of 8.92.

Clothing for Females and Males

Clothing for Females and Males – *Early Seal Period* (Plates 8.94 to 8.99)

Elizabeth Barber has given us a splendid treatment of prehistoric textiles to begin our survey of clothing¹⁰. A catalogue of Aegean dress has been compiled by Berenice Jones to cover both women's and men's garments¹¹. Her descriptions are taken into account in the IconAegean Vocabulary which includes more detail from the seal images. The IconAegean Vocabulary sees Minoan women as wearing long pants in addition to the many styles of skirts and has the cloak as a significant accoutrement for the Minoan male. In the treatment of clothing here, female figures are identified by wearing either a skirt or long pants and may wear a scarf, cape or a mantle while the full array for males lists belt, belt and kilt (which includes the codpiece and back flap), long kilt, diagonal robe, mantle and cloak.

In the Early Seals three garments are clearly shown for females. In 8.94 the side-pleated skirt is seen tied at the waist by a girdle with pom poms. In 8.95 a woman wears a simple skirt made of patterned material. In 8.96 the seated female wears long pants, the hemline being marked by a bump at the calf. In the profile depictions of 8.94 and 8.96 a peak is shaped at the nape of the neck although it is not clear if it is a bodice projection or a separate clothing item which may be the precursor of a scarf.

For males in this period virtually no attention is paid to clothing. The usual depiction of males at this time is of body shape with no clothing as in 8.13, 8.15 and 8.17. A kilt may be suggested in 8.16. The one item of clothing that is regularly shown from MM II is the cloak as in 8.99. It conceals the body in a distinctive shape and is patterned, the fabric design being shown as marks or stripes. The cloak may also be the garment indicated in 8.98 with the pose of the figures changing the cloak shape a little. However, in 8.97, because the figure is seated in such an auspicious position with an identifying tree behind, it may be an early Seated Lady. If so, the enveloping garment may be the earliest depiction of the mantle.

Clothing for Females and Males – *Experimentation Period, Minoan High Art* (Plates 8.100 to 8.129)

The full range of garments for females is now observable: six skirts, two long pants, various scarves, capes and mantles. The flounced skirts in 8.100 all have long underskirts falling to the feet. The frilled skirts in 8.100, 8.101 and 8.104 show the distinctive horizontal frills and the single vertical seam line. Two women wear fringed skirts in 8.102 revealing the deep panel of vertical patterning at the hem. The

10 Barber 1991 and 1994 with further comments in Barber 2005, 41-42, and 2012, 25-29.

11 Jones 2015. The IconAegean Vocabulary uses some of Jones' terms like the side-pleated skirt but adds descriptive terms for the long pants. Jones' full discussion of the Minoan bodice is not paralleled in the IconAegean Vocabulary because the size of the seal designs prevents a clear understanding of its intricacies. Sometimes bodice details are indicated but as they are not treated systematically across the images a separate term has not been assigned. A note is made in the IconAegean Database entry where the bodice details are clear.

fleecy skirt in 8.103 has an A-line shape and is covered with small markings to give the shaggy effect of a fleece. The lappet skirt is worn by the woman facing the man in 8.104. This skirt comprises a set of long ribbons (lappets) fixed to a girdle which, when tied around the waist, allows the ribbons to fall down over an underskirt. In 8.105 five women wear the side-pleated skirt known from the earlier period, as well as capes covering the upper body to just below the waist. Long pants are regularly shown as in 8.106 to 8.108. The hemline is always clearly marked at the calf, most often as chevrons as in 8.106 and 8.108¹². Long pants may have added flounces as with the folds across the thighs and knees in 8.107. The two types of pants, long pants and diaphanous¹³ long pants, are distinguished by their differently weighted materials: a firmly woven concealing fabric as in 8.107 and a lighter almost transparent fabric as in 8.108. With the diaphanous pants it may be simply the case that their clinging soft nature reveals the female body shape as in 8.106 or it may be that the leg shape is revealed within the pants line indicating a true diaphanous tissue as in 8.108. The scarf may be tied around the neck with ends floating free as in 8.109. If tied as a bow at the nape of the neck, as with the two women in 8.110, then the scarf knot is created. A cape covering the upper body is seen in 8.111. The mantle is a full-length wrap tied across one shoulder. It may be diaphanous as in 8.117.

For males the full range of garments is now revealed. The standard attire is belt with codpiece and back flap as in 8.112 but this is often attenuated to show only the belt as in 8.113. This stress on a confining belt accentuates the slender waist of the Minoan male as in 8.115 and 8.119. The torso is covered more when the long kilt is worn as in 8.114 and 8.115; here the waist may be slender or not. The full-length garment of the diagonal robe is seen in 8.116. A man may also wear a full-length mantle as in 8.152 where it is also diaphanous. The cloak becomes even more important in this period, with careful attention given to its patterns and its fringe. In 8.192 the main part of the cloak is woven with parallel rows of chevrons like a tweed pattern and the fringe is deep and heavy hanging. The cloak, when folded into the cloak knot, becomes even more closely associated with warriors and hunters and the symbols of war and the hunt, as discussed below.

Hats, headdresses and head coverings are many and varied in the Minoan High Art Period although only a few are mentioned in clothing reviews. All are here termed hats and there are nine: horn bow, plumed, high, pointed, peaked, brimmed, flat, round and cap. The horn bow hat, seen in 8.118, is perhaps the most discussed headdress. Either two or three horn bows are set, one above the other, and usually topped by a double axe. The double or triple horn bow hat is worn only by Mistress of Animals figures. The horn bows are actually the recurved composite bows used as weapons. The size of the headdress reflects this identity, as will be discussed further below in the war/hunt equipment discussion. The knobbed ends mark where the bowstring is fastened when the bow is strung. Bows are held/stored unstrung and are strung just before firing. Thus, bows are maintained free from the tension (and thus the stress on materials) that occurs when they are strung for use. Showing them unstrung is simply registering the way they are mostly seen. The plumed hat has a flat shape with a plume springing out from the centre top. It is worn in 8.119 by a male VIP. The high hat as in 8.120 is a very tall headdress reducing to a point at the top¹⁴ and is worn by women. The pointed hat as in 8.121 covers the head and comes to a point. It may be worn by males or females. The peaked hat as in 8.121 and 8.122 is a cap with a peak pulled to the front. It is worn by women and may be a snood. The brimmed hat as in 8.123 has a distinct wide flat brim. It may be worn by male or female figures. The flat hat as in 8.124 sits neatly down on the head and is worn by a male, a sailor. The round hat as in 8.125 is rather like a basin upended on the head. It is worn by VIPs, either male or female. The cap hat as in 8.126 fits the head closely and has a tail down the back. It is worn by males.

12 As noted in Chapter 3, the angular markings for the hemline are called “saumwinkel” in the CMS descriptions.

13 This sealing occasioned much discussion on one of my visits to Marburg, and I am indebted to Ingo Pini and Walter Müller for their observations. It is considered a high point in technique for seal carvers to be able to render a body beneath a fine fabric drape, just as it is for sculptors in larger media.

14 Although in one case the top is flat, CMS II.6 13.

Clothing for Females and Males – *Legacy and Late Periods* (Plates 8.130 to 8.135)

Clothing for females at first follows the Minoan style with flounced skirts as in 8.130 and some long pants as in 8.131. However, the intricacies of Minoan female apparel are often misunderstood. Later a long straight gown makes its appearance as in 8.132.

Similarly for males, the belt and kilt continue where the codpiece may be shown as in 8.133. Even the belt is dispensed with in some representations as in 8.134. A new garment, the simple knee-length tunic, now appears as in 8.135.

Equipment for War and the Hunt

Equipment for War and the Hunt – *Early Seal Period* (Plates 8.136 to 8.144)

The equipment for war and the hunt comprises bow, arrow, staff, spear, grand spear, sword, eight shield, tower shield, tusk helmet, crested helmet, cloak, hide apron and panoply. In the early seal 8.136 the simple bow and the short sword or dagger are depicted in battle in a duel. By MM II the bow, arrow, spear and sword are shown as in 8.137 to 8.140. A sword or dagger is shown as sole subject in 8.140 but, lacking associated detail to give scale, it is not clear which weapon is intended. In the IconAegean Vocabulary the term, sword, covers both possibilities. The eight shield is featured in sole subject compositions as in 8.141 but can also be placed beside human figures as in 8.142. The two male figures in 8.143 are clothed in cloaks, one with a sword point protruding from beneath.

In 8.144 the grand spear, which has a knobbed haft and large detailed point, is shown as CHIC 050 with other hieroglyphs¹⁵.

Equipment for War and the Hunt – *Minoan High Art* (Plates 8.145 to 8.153)

All the items of war and hunt equipment, both offensive and defensive, are seen in Minoan High Art. In 8.145 the archer draws his bow while in 8.146 the VIP holds his bow down. In 8.145 the bow is strung because it is in use but in 8.146 it is unstrung because it is not. The composite bow, unstrung, is placed in various non-combat settings, and in these it is termed the horn bow. One may be shown, or two or three placed one above the other. A single horn bow is seen in 8.168, a double horn bow in 8.118 and a triple horn bow in 8.147. In these latter two examples the double or triple horn bow becomes the horn bow hat worn by the Mistress of Animals where it is topped by a double axe. Simple bows are usually bows of wood and show a single arc when drawn. Composite bows are made of wood, horn and sinew and typically show a recurved shape as in 8.146, 8.147 and 8.152. The inward curve where the aiming hand holds the bow is in the centre, with the bow shape flaring away to the tips which are defined by rings or knobs to help secure the string¹⁶. The sword, spear and tower shield are seen in use in 8.148 while the spear and eight shield are seen carried by warriors on parade in 8.149. A large man-covering defence shield is seen in 8.151. The grand spear shafts a bull in 8.150. Helmets are regularly worn as in 8.148 and 8.149. They are close-fitting to the head and usually crested with a flowing plume. In 8.165 a tusk helmet is shown in detail with bands for the boar teeth and cheek flaps. In the helmet in 3.93 the alternating rows of boar tusks are quite clear as are the fixing ties and crest and the added (ram) horns. The defensive body armour is the hide apron of characteristic shape suggesting leather working. In the precise representation in 8.192 two warriors wear the hide apron, with one wrapped in a magnificent cloak where the detail of pattern and fringe is carefully depicted. When weapons are gathered and displayed as a group then we have the panoply image. In 8.166 the panoply consists of eight shield, helmet, swords and greaves. The eight shield is given arms to brandish the swords. In 8.152 the panoply occupies the full curve in the right of the bezel, thus indicating its importance, and it consists of the eight shield in profile, the bow and a folded cloak containing the sword with only the pommel showing at the

15 CHIC, 15-16.

16 On the composite bow see Bakas 2016, 9-15.

top. In a parallel image in the right curve of the bezel in the gold signet 8.178 the panoply comprises an eight shield in profile and folded cloak with protruding sword pommel. When the cloak is folded and shown by itself it becomes the cloak knot as seen in 8.164 where three are placed between eight shields. In this form it can be shown suspended by a tie at the upper end as in 8.68. The long plain rod and the staff, as noted above, can be a carrying pole or a walking aid in the early seals. The carrying pole is seen again in 8.121 and 8.122. The staff can also be an offensive weapon, readily available and very efficient with trained moves¹⁷. In Minoan High Art the staff is held by VIPs. The staff is shown in its long form in 8.66, 8.114 and 8.115 and in its short form in 8.67 and 8.160. In its short form it can also have a curved handle as in 8.192, continuing its use as observed earlier in 8.191. The advent of the horse-drawn chariot provides for a whole new range of specialist constructions. In 8.153 the wagon with four-spoked wheel and the harness and reins are shown while the driver wields a two-lashed whip over the horses.

Equipment for War and the Hunt – *Legacy and Late Periods* (Plates 8.154 to 8.159)

There is a continuation in the Legacy Period of the offensive weapons, particularly the sword as seen in the war and hunt scenes 8.154 and 8.155. The eight shield as in 8.156, the horn bow as in 8.157 and the grand spear as in 8.158 also appear in the early part of the Period. A Griffin Master carries the staff in 8.159.

Iconographic Interpretation: Industrious and Innovative Artisans

The above collection of images of human artefacts, small and large, provides a succinct summary of the industrious life of Aegean citizens. The seal artists have given us a palpable sense of the constructed environment, from carrying poles to ships and shrines, from clothing for women and men to equipment for warriors and hunters. This overview of citizen industry is presented by the seal artists, not by showing the workers actually practising their craft, but by displaying the finished product. The number of such depictions and the care with which the detail is pursued testify to the importance of the constructed artefact. The following discussion encompasses the Minoan experience while the Mycenaean view is discussed in Chapter 14.

It is clear that the Minoan community appreciates the labours of their skilful workers and delights in the beauty of their products. If it were not so, we would not have pictures of the little hand-made things, of collars, cords, nets and festoons, of wickerwork, stools, seats, lyres and altars. Depictions of major constructions like shrines and buildings pay tribute to the carpenters and masons. Yet the great palace buildings are not placed centre stage in Minoan High Art. The shrines, altars and ships are the focus of the seal designs. There are seven shrines and three altars, each with distinct construction and with distinct function, with perhaps the most striking ones being the tree shrine discussed above in connection with the pulling the tree ceremony and the curved altar which also becomes a base for potent symbols as discussed below. Ships do occupy a central design position, given sole subject prominence, and they have done so since the earliest seal images. By LM times the *Icon* of the ship *ikrion* becomes a statement of seafaring expertise in a *pars pro toto* composition. While respect must be shown for the carpentry skills evident in the actual ship construction, much consideration also needs to be given to the time, effort and expertise of weavers who supply sails and ropes. The sails would need far more time to manufacture, possibly twenty times that required to build the ship¹⁸. The spinning, weaving and finishing of the sail fabric requires immense skill and must have occupied many, many craft workers.

Clothing was of great importance to the Minoans and they spent immense effort in producing garments of great variety, but again it is not the making of the garments that they are interested in

17 Compare the quarterstaff of English tradition and the bo staff of Asian martial arts.

18 St Clair 2018, 97-114. In her Chapter on the Viking ships, St Clair estimates that it would take two skilled shipwrights two weeks to make a longboat while creating a sail would take two skilled women a full year or more, depending on the size required.

presenting. There are no extended images of spinning or weaving here. Instead, it is the finished product that is depicted in fascinating detail. This is particularly observable in the rendition of women's attire and its significance. As with traditional societies, the many skirts worn here by females, particularly the frilled, flounced and lappet skirts, are likely to be revealing of age and marriage status. The frilled skirt may be the attire of the young girl while the usual flounced skirt would be the dress of the married woman. The lappet skirt is such a particular piece of apparel, not really a concealing skirt at all, that it calls for an explanation. Elizabeth Barber has pointed to the significance of the string skirt as marking the coming to fertility of the young female, and her analysis of the wearing of the string skirt from the palaeolithic era down to modern European folk costumes is a *tour de force*¹⁹. Seeing the lappet skirt as the continuum of the string skirt in the Aegean Bronze Age would be an appropriate interpretation, as would be the acceptance of its meaning as declaring that the young woman is available for marriage.

Further investigation of the finished clothing product reveals more delightful details. In the early seal images there were attempts at differentiation of materials and weaving patterns as in 8.95, 8.98 and 8.99 but by LM I the interest in fabric is palpably strong. The flounces of 8.127 show different weaving patterns. In 8.129 the flounces are differentiated as if stitched together in separate panels. Many of the flounced skirts appear to sway with the body, thus suggesting they were cut on the bias. Exploring the behaviour of fabric when bias cut would fit perfectly with the Minoan interest in movement. Now look at 8.128 and see how the long scarf drapes the upper female body and falls to the ground between the legs. Here the diaphanous pants are clearly of a lightweight fabric, clinging to and revealing the body beneath. In 8.109 the scarf ends floating free also suggest a very fine material. The enveloping cloak in 8.184 to 8.192 may owe its bulk and weight to being worked of un-scoured wool. With reference to the detail of 8.127, 8.128 and 8.129, look again at the clothing in 8.100 to 8.108 and 8.114 to 8.117 to celebrate the depiction of weave, weight and texture. The implications are that we are dealing with different fabrics like wool, linen and silk. Colour differentiation is not available to us in the seal images but it is expected that the patterning observed in these details reflects woven colour patterns. Further decorative effects in clothing are achieved by the addition of tassels, pompoms and ties. Tassels are lovingly depicted in the fringe of the long scarf in 8.128, the "bobbles" on one end hanging at the back of the VIP and on the other end spilling down onto the ground. Tassels top the pointed hat of the VIP in 8.114 and hang from the hands and arms of women in 8.100 and 8.110 (although not fully shown in the line drawing). Fringe-like festoons decorate an altar in 8.33. Then there are all the ties and girdles that show special effects. The cord that tethers the griffin in 8.36 is finished in a bow with a tassel. An elaborate tie on the shoulder secures the mantle in 8.117. While there are pompoms to finish the earlier girdle tie in 8.94, the VIP and her servers in 8.70 are dressed identically right down to the distinctive girdle ties that hang down their backs. Even without falling ties, girdles are regularly featured by being shown as a thick roll, double roll or triple roll around the waist, seen most clearly in 8.117, 8.127 and 8.129. The girdle tie that holds the lappet skirt as in 8.104, 8.176 and 8.178 is especially clearly delineated. The amount of the community's time that must have been devoted to the sourcing of the thread and to its spinning and weaving in order to achieve this beautiful clothing is only now beginning to be appreciated anew with recent fabric research.

Expressive detail continues in the depiction of equipment for war and the hunt, both defensive and offensive. The hide apron as in 8.184 and 8.192, acting as armour, is likely to be made of leather, tanned and shaped to protect the lower body while still allowing movement. The curved surface of the eight shield, a difficult shape to manufacture, is designed to deflect missiles as in 8.152 and 8.166. The curves replicate the shape of the symmetrical or equivalved forms of the common bivalve shell when it is opened. Did this natural form, with its capacity to "bounce away" falling sand particles, inspire the eight shield shape? The cloak knot always portrays the characteristics of the cloak itself, the heavy woven material and the deep fringe, while giving its folded shape the characteristic tied and "bent over"

19 Barber 1994, 54-70. Written as ever with verve and clarity, the survey covers an immense amount of time and geography yet can also insert a reference to Homer's description of the dalliance of Hera and Zeus.

top as in 8.164. The binding tie can conveniently provide the means for the cloak knot to be hung up as on the grand pillar in 8.68. The cloak knot is not to be confused with the scarf knot of lighter weight worn by women at the nape of the neck or shown separately with its characteristic loop at the top as it is doubled, twisted and pulled through to form the loop²⁰. Eventually, the chariot with all its accoutrements becomes an important subject and is given sole subject status, thus reflecting its prestige position in the warfare scene²¹.

Constructed Symbols: staff, grand pillar and double horns (Plates 8.160 to 8.162)

The seal artists have also created some of the most identifiable symbols of Minoan life out of their human-made environment, with these constructed symbols reaching deep into the functioning of Minoan society and into Minoan belief systems. The fine detail of the depiction reveals the Minoans' sophisticated appreciation of skilled artisanship and their amazing ingenuity in extrapolating detail to create potent symbols. The staff, grand pillar and double horns are discussed first while two other groups of symbols, the special objects and the hovering symbols, follow.

The staff is the statement *par excellence* of authority in Minoan Crete. The staff might have begun more humbly as the useful carrying pole or hiking aid or as an offensive weapon used by mortals, as discussed above. However, in Minoan High Art, the day-to-day uses are minimally shown and the staff is held out in the power gesture which is the prerogative of deities. It is likely that the power wielded in its original function as an offensive weapon is the symbolism that continues through into the later era. These VIPs hold or carry it as a mark of their status as with the Staff Lord in 8.115 and 4.96 or brandish it together with the sword as the Staff Lady in 8.103. Full figure VIPs stand holding out the long staff in the power gesture as in 8.114, 8.66 and 6.162. VIPs appearing on high hold the short staff in the power gesture to display their commanding presence over mortal women and men as in 8.160 and 8.67. No ordinary mortal is seen to carry or use such a staff in this way.

The grand pillar is the symbol of structural integrity in Minoan Crete. Pillars may be shown within a larger construction or may be shown isolated from the full building in an extreme example of the *pars pro toto* compositional device where the single pillar stands for the whole construction, even possibly the palace itself. Pillars shown integrated within the larger construction are those standing in the facades of buildings and gates as in 8.66 and those forming part of shrines as in 8.70 to 8.72. In 8.161 the gate or gate shrine is featured as the focus of an antithetical group composition. When the pillar is extracted from its primary construction role and placed isolated in a significant position then it becomes the grand pillar. The grand pillar is placed at the back of a deity in 8.69 and behind the main group in 8.177 in the right curve of the bezel. It is featured before a shrine in 8.67 and identifies a pillar shrine in 8.71. It is used to maximum effect when it is the focus of an antithetical group composition as in 8.68 where it is protected by lions and in 10.138 by geniuses. This is the Minoan adaption of the animals at the tree of life where the central eastern symbol is replaced by one that has potent meaning for Crete. We have earlier drawn attention to the seismic nature of the island in the interpretation given to the kneeling the boulder ceremony. This ever-present concern over earthquake destruction may well recommend the closest attention to structural members of any building. So, the artist takes the basic pillar and uses it first as the summary of the building which needs to remain intact as the earthquake strikes and then presents it in various settings as the symbol of structural integrity.

The double horns symbol is widely used in Minoan High Art. The name "double horns" is used here as a descriptive iconographic term and does not propose an origin in bull horns. What then are its inspiration and its meaning? Its shape is virtually the same as the Egyptian hieroglyph for mountain, *dw* Gardiner N26, and it does not show the addition of the sun symbol nestled in the curve which

20 Evans saw in these two images the same clothing item, completely missing the difference in the weight and weaving as well as the difference in the folded or looped tops. He coined the term "sacral knot" to cover all such shapes, and this has led to misunderstandings ever since.

21 See Crouwel 1981 and 2005, 39-44.

would make it the hieroglyph for horizon, *ht* Gardiner N27²². Is this the inspiration for the double horns? Nanno Marinatos has been directing us for some time to look at Minoan links to the solar cult of Egypt²³. The placement of double horns high on buildings and shrines would suggest looking upwards to the sky. Is the double horns symbol an artificial horizon²⁴? When observing astronomical data it is necessary to take the sightings from a fixed position. Standing before an artificial horizon to locate the movement of celestial bodies in relation to points on that horizon gives just that certainty. The almost architectural shape of the double horns directs attention to the midpoint on the base between the horns which is shown in the most detailed depictions as a low point. This point marks the sighting for the arrival of sun, moon or stars at whatever the time of year it may be. The vital sighting is the mid-winter solstice which signals the sun stopping at its most distant point and then beginning its welcome return. Earlier in our discussions, the sky symbols of sun and moon were seen as evidence of a Minoan lunisolar calendar²⁵. The double horns as an artificial horizon accords well with this interpretation in providing the means for ascertaining precise astral measurements. The usage of the double horns symbol showing it small-scale with plants, ewers, vases and bee smokers points to the sighting of the next most important celestial event, the vernal equinox, with the land warming and vegetation sprouting. Plants grow out of the central (low) point of the double horns in 5.48 and in 5.75 where it is the focus of an antithetical group showing geniuses tending the plant with ewers. In 8.25 and 8.170 ewers accompany the plant growing out of the double horns. In 8.27 the vase sits in the double horns. In 5.78 and 8.77 the plant growing in double horns is placed beside bee smokers. All these images link the double horns to the sprouting and sustaining of vegetation in the agricultural cycle and thus to its use in predicting the seasons. Early European societies have gone to immense trouble to build fixed observation points, from the roof box of the Newgrange monument to the bluestones and sarsens of Stonehenge²⁶. The double horns may well be the Minoan parallel.

Special Objects (Plates 8.163 to 8.174)

Many minor constructions take on a new life when they become symbols in their own right. These are gathered together under the general term of special objects and operate within the iconographic repertoire in myriad ways. Of the twelve special objects of symbolic importance, ten are made by human hand: double axe, eight shield, helmet, panoply, cloak knot, horn bow, scarf knot, orb rod, ewer and vase. Only the triple bud rod and the triton are sourced from the natural world. These two symbols are illustrated in 8.173 and 8.174 and were discussed in Chapters 5 and 7 above. The double axe can be sole subject as in 8.163. It is carried in procession in 8.28 and 8.184 and stands on an altar in 8.80. It surmounts a bull head in 6.100 and this has been taken to mean the sacrifice of the bull using the double axe. There are no images showing the double axe being used in this way but then, there are no clear images of the actual act of sacrifice in the Ceremony of Animal Sacrifice, as discussed above in Chapter 6. Lacking supporting evidence, it seems prudent to pause the sacrifice interpretation and look for credible meanings of the double axe symbol elsewhere. If, as is likely, the double axe was originally a war weapon, then its symbolism is sourced in its message of a warrior leader's conquering power. The eight shield, helmet, panoply and cloak knot are known in their primary use of weaponry but when used apart from this they become the symbols of the warrior/hunter and stand in his stead. The four symbols are featured

22 Gardiner 1950, N Sky, Earth, Water, 489.

23 Particularly in Marinatos 2010, METAPHYSIS, 3-11, ZOIA, 215-222.

24 Artificial horizon as created for astronomical observations not the altitude indicator of modern aviation.

25 See the Iconographic Interpretation section, Sky Symbols, in Chapter 4 above.

26 The Newgrange monument in Ireland is dated c.3200 BCE and is aligned to allow the sunrise of the winter solstice to flood light through the roof box above the passage door into the inner chamber. Stonehenge is part of an extensive grouping of Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments in Great Britain with its main stone-raising period being c.2600-1600 BCE. The alignment at Stonehenge is towards sunrise on the summer solstice and towards sunset on the winter solstice.

as sole subject as shown in 8.164 to 8.166. The panoply is seen featured in the right curve of the bezel in the cultscapes in 8.152 and in 8.178 close to its owner who is otherwise occupied. The helmet can be featured as a sole subject but also makes an appearance in the Zakros fantasy designs worn by birdwomen as in 11.83 and a composite female being as in 11.84. The cloak knot is seen early in 8.188, is also carried in processions as in 8.184 and can be hung up on the prestigious symbol of the grand pillar as in 8.68. In the animal with the special object *Icon*, the special object is often of reduced size and is always shown separate from the animal which seems unaware of it. Both details emphasise that the object is used symbolically with the animal. The eight shield features in this way as in the early example with the agrimi in 3.25 and later with the stag in 6.26. In this way the quarry animals are tied specifically to the role of the armed warrior or hunter. The horn bow is the archer's composite bow shown unstrung. As a special object its main role is to form the headdress of the Mistress of Animals, particularly in its double and triple forms as in 8.118 and 8.147. Thus, the horn bow becomes the symbol of the archer's successful hunt which involves the death of the animals of the Mistress. The scarf knot is the looped knot of fine material seen in its primary use as clothing at the nape of the neck on women as in 8.110. As a special object it appears to be the prestige garment representing women. Its symbolic use is to have it placed with a fluttering pair in a boulder kneeling cultscape as in 8.167. The orb rod in 8.172 is being offered by a server to a deity, the Great Seated Lady, and so can be seen as a symbol of her authority. The ewer and vase are elevated from their primary role of pouring liquids. The ewer is the vessel held by the genius from the time of the early seals as in 8.6 through to Minoan High Art as in 8.22 while the vase can be the focus of an antithetical group as in 8.23. Both ewer and vase are used extensively in talismanic seals where they are understood to be watering the plants shown with them as in 8.169 to 8.172, the plants sometimes growing from double horns or near bee smokers as noted above.

Hovering Symbols (Plates 8.175 to 8.183)

Even more restricted in their use are the ten hovering symbols that are positioned above human figures in the complex scenes. Eight of these are seen in LM I compositions: the eye, ear, grainshape, piriformshape, pillarshape, curlshape, triple bud rod and double axe with scarf²⁷. Three of these, the triple bud rod, double axe and panoply, are also members of the special objects group of symbols as discussed above, and a fourth, the scarf knot, is joined with the double axe to create a new symbol, the double axe with scarf. The eye and ear are clear in 8.110 and the eye in 8.100 and 8.180. The eye has already featured as an hieroglyphic sign. In 8.175 the eye and ear are featured in what is virtually a sole subject design. The grainshape is an ear of grain as in 8.69, 8.104, 8.178 and 8.179. The piformshapes seen in 8.176, 8.178 and 8.181 are the variously shaped rhytons. The pillarshape as in 8.180 and 8.181 and the curlshape as in 8.66 and 8.69 are not yet surely identified. The triple bud rod is seen in 8.177. The triple bud is the symbol of sprouting plant growth and enveloping greenery from the time of the early seals as in 5.11. The double axe with scarf as seen in 8.176 and 8.178 shows the scarf looped around the double axe as noted earlier when seen featured as a sole subject in 8.30. The hovering symbol *Icon* is one of the indicators of a cultscape. The human figures depicted below in these particular cultscapes show no recognition of the hovering symbols poised over their heads. These items cannot be hovering there in any true-life situation but are to be read as symbols carrying special meaning for the humans below. I propose that they are the equivalent of prayers offered up to the gods for good health, safety, successful harvests and individual success²⁸.

The Ceremony of Presenting the Cloak (Plates 8.184 to 8.192)

²⁷ The other two hovering symbols, the double axe and panoply, are seen only in 8.183 and are discussed in Chapter 14 below.

²⁸ A detailed exposition of the hovering symbols and celestial signs was presented to the Vienna Aegaeum Conference and may be found in Crowley, *METAPHYSIS*, 89-96.

The cloak is regularly seen being worn by males and has a distinctive outline from MM II times. In Minoan High Art the cloak is seen in panoply groups as in 8.152 and in 8.178 with the owner nearby. When folded, it becomes the special object, the cloak knot, and is shown as sole subject or with warrior symbols like the eight shield or hunting links with a stag. Every illustration proclaims that the cloak is a prestige garment. Further, in each depiction there is such attention to its weave and fringe as to suggest a unique product. If this is indeed the case then we are dealing with a prestige garment created for a special person, a garment that not only proclaims the status of the person but the importance of his individual life. Weaving, knitting or crocheting a special garment with its own special design for a special/beloved person needs no explanation. The iconography of the cloak presents it as the status garment for the Minoan male, granted to a specifically chosen recipient.

Gathering the images of the cloak when shown with human figures, we see that a ceremony involving the warrior elite is proceeding, and we are granted glimpses of the different stages in its performance. The opening to the grand event is noted in bringing the cloak, folded as a cloak knot, to the presentation ceremony. In 8.184 and 8.190 the male bearers wear the warrior hide apron and in addition carry the double axe, thus further signifying the importance of the occasion. The next act is the preparing and presenting of the cloak to the recipient by a group of males as portrayed in 8.188 and 8.189. Finally, as in 8.191 and 8.192, the recipient is featured clothed in the cloak. In both these illustrations, the symbolic staff with curved handle is seen, in one case held by the recipient himself, in the other carried by the warrior leading the newly cloaked recipient. That the recipient is a warrior is indicated by the sword pommel protruding from his cloak in 8.191 and the hide apron showing beneath his cloak in 8.192. Devoting an image to the recipient wearing the cloak marks this significant moment in the warrior's career.

Now, can the three other images that share some of the iconographic details discussed above, also be part of the ceremony of presenting the cloak? The kilted male in 8.187 carries a cloak knot over his shoulders as he stands by a papyrus plant²⁹ which is an indicator of the supernatural Papyrus Garden. In 8.185 a female figure clothed in long pants with hemline carries both cloak knot and double axe, the linkage also seen in 8.184 and 8.190. Then in 8.186 a large female figure, similarly clothed, gives an elaborately figured cloak knot to a much smaller male figure. This image gives the clue to the female being a VIP Lady, a deity, because of her size, and to the figure in 8.185 similarly being a deity. Accordingly, gathering all the iconographic details together, we would see these three images as raising the ceremony up to the supernatural sphere. Now we see a female deity bestowing the prized cloak, and by implication blessing the recipient, as she presides over the ceremony that was so significant to the warrior elite.

29 The seal/bead is broken, shearing off a large part of the fringe. The loop for hanging the cloak knot is rather exaggerated, leading to mistaken readings of animal legs sticking out.

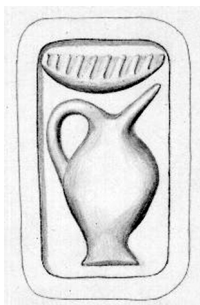
Comparisons with Images in Other Media

1. Gold and bronze double axes from Arkalochori, Nirou Chani and Zakros.
FLL, Plates 194 to 197.
2. The steatite relief rhyton, called the Harvesters' Vase, from Hagia Triada. The leader of the procession wears a patterned and fringed cloak and carries a staff with a curved handle.
CM, Plate 103.
3. The woman wearing the scarf knot in the fresco from the Palace at Knossos.
CM, Plate XVI.
4. Ivory sculpture from Mycenae showing two women in elaborate Minoan clothing with a small child.
NM, Plate 38.
5. Weapons and armour.
Daggers, swords and spears. FLL, Plates 73 to 79.
Swords and niello daggers. NM, 24 to 31.
Tusk helmet. FLL, Plate 80.
Plaques of helmeted warriors. FLL, Plates 81 and 82.
Ivory warrior head wearing a tusk helmet. NM, 87.

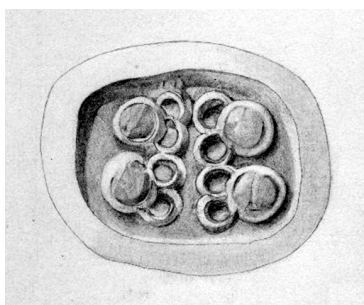
Plates 8.1 to 8.192

Vessels, Tools and Other Small Items

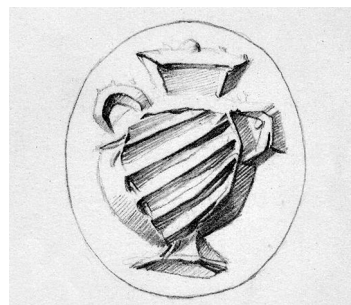
Vessels, Tools and Other Small Items – *Early Seal Period*



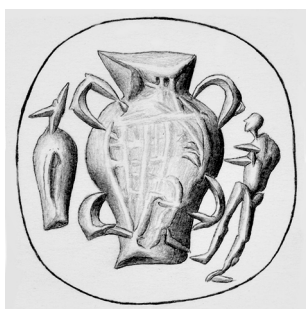
8.1 – jug
(II.5 240/MM II)



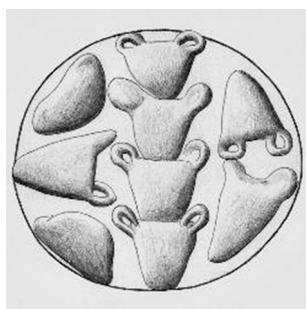
8.2 – flask
(IX 32/MM II)



8.3 – amphora
(VIII 100c/MM II)



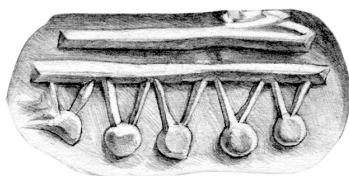
8.4 – pithos, jug
(VI 45b/MM II)



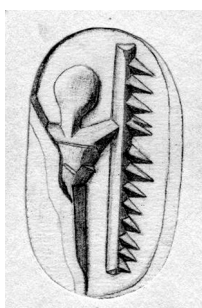
8.5 – skyphos
(II.6 226/MM I-MM II)



8.6 – ewer, genius
(II.5 322/MM II)



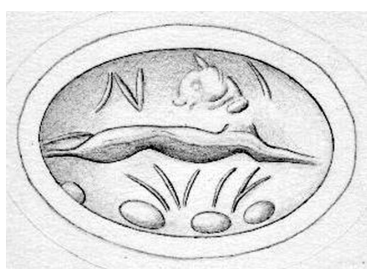
8.7 – carrying pole with loads, staff
(IX 13b/MM II)



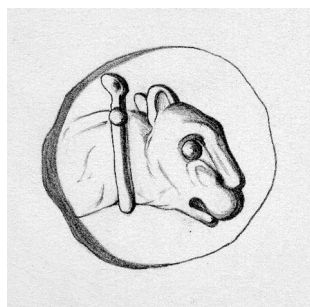
8.8 – toothed pole
(II.2 102a/MM II)



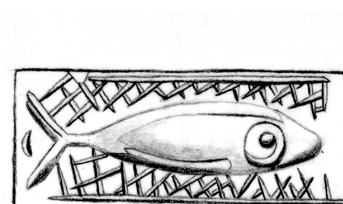
8.9 – spiked pole
(II.2 233a/MM II)



8.10 – collar, hound
(II.5 277/MM II)



8.11 – collar, hound
(VIII 115/MM II)

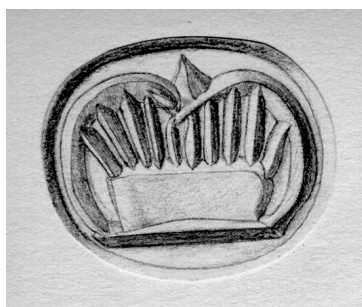


8.12 – net, fish
(IS 73a/MM II)

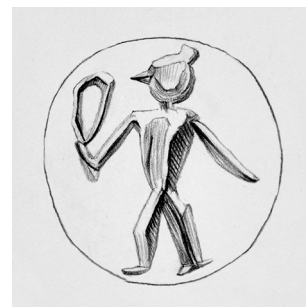
Vessels, Tools and Other Small Items – *Early Seal Period (cont.)*



8.13 – musical instruments?
(II.6 150/EM III-MM IA)



8.14 – lyre
(II.2 86a/MM II)



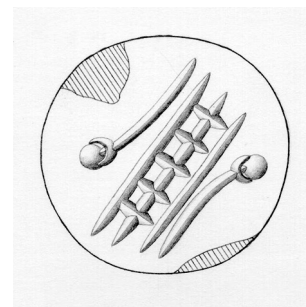
8.15 – sistrum?
(VI 84a/?)



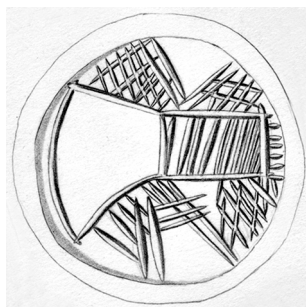
8.16 – basket
(II.1 391k/EM III-MM IA)



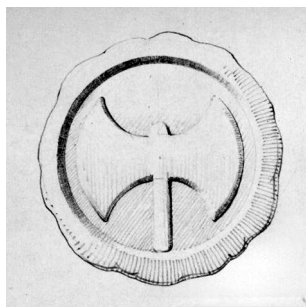
8.17 – stool as seat
(VI 44a/MM II)



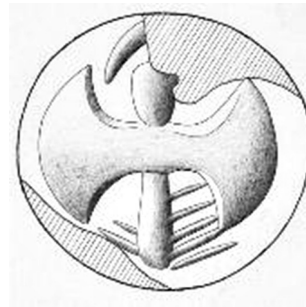
8.18 – orb rod?
(VS 1A 330c/MM II-MM III)



8.19 – single axe
(IV 153/MM II-MM III)



8.20 – double axe
(II.5 231/MM II)



8.21 – double axe
(II.8 55/MM II)

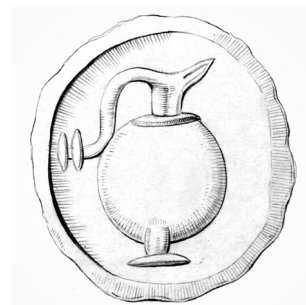
Vessels, Tools and Other Small Items – *Minoan High Art*



8.22 – ewer, genius
(XII 212/LM I)

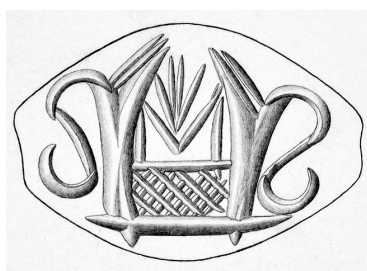


8.23 – vase
(III 377/LM I)



8.24 – ewer
(I 114/LB I-LB II)

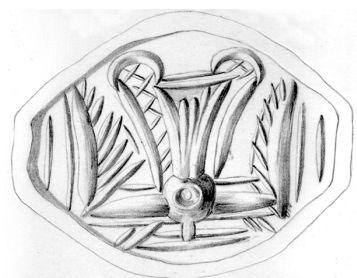
Vessels, Tools and Other Small Items – *Minoan High Art (cont.)*



8.25 – ewer, double horns
(III 260/LM I)



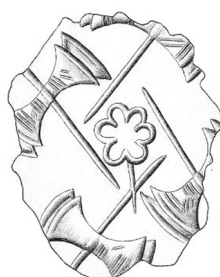
8.26 – ewer, plants
(II.3 261/LM I)



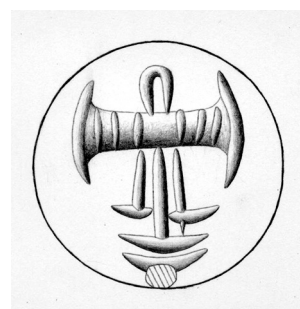
8.27 – vase in double horns
(IV 201/LM I)



8.28 – double axe, bearers
(II.6 10/LM I)



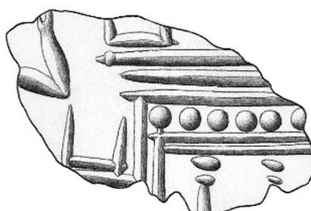
8.29 – double axe
(II.8 125/LM I)



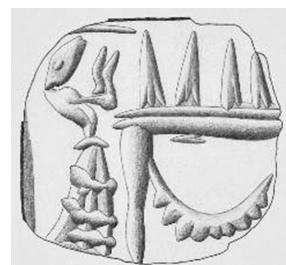
8.30 – double axe with scarf knot
(VS 1B 138b/LB I-LB II)



8.31 – orb rod, bearer
(VS 1A 177/LM I)



8.32 – double horns, building
(II.8 273/LM I)



8.33 – festoon, altar, server
(II.6.3/LM I)



8.34 – collar, hound
(II.6 76/LM I)

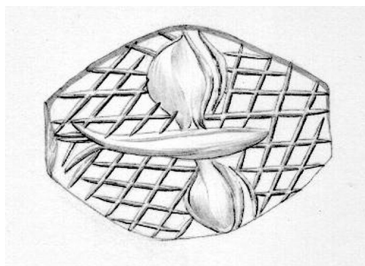


8.35 – cord/collar, Lion Lady
(XI 256/LM I)

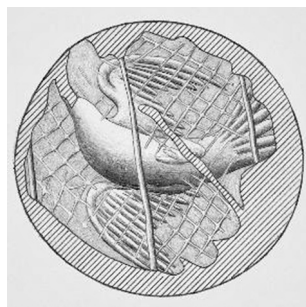


8.36 – cord/collar, Griffin Lord
(I 223/LB I-LB II)

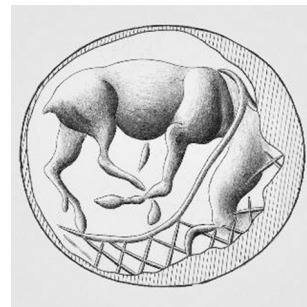
Vessels, Tools and Other Small Items – Minoan High Art (cont.)



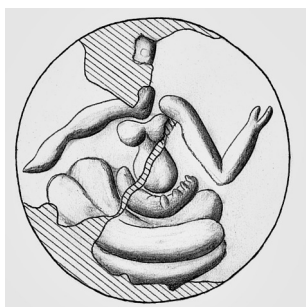
8.37 – net, flying fish
(X 95/LM I)



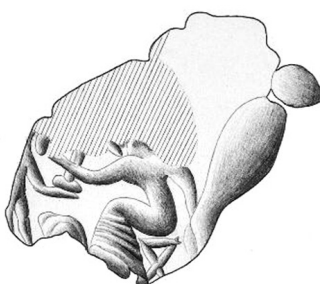
8.38 – net, bird
(II.6 123/LM I)



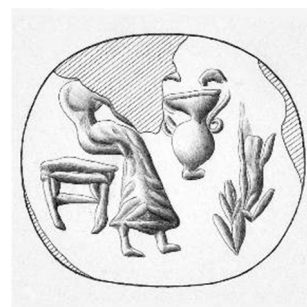
8.39 – net, bull
(II.6 49/LM I)



8.40 – seat of cushions
(II.7 22/LM I)



8.41 – camp stool
(II.8 240/–)

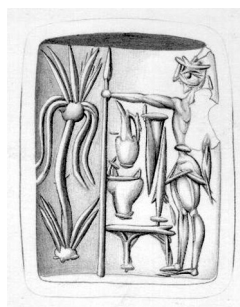


8.42 – stool, Great Lady
(II.8 243/–)

Vessels, Tools and Other Small Items – Legacy and Late Periods



8.43 – ewer, genius
(XI 290/LH II-LH IIIA1)



8.44 – vessels
(V 608/LM IIIA1-LM IIIA2)



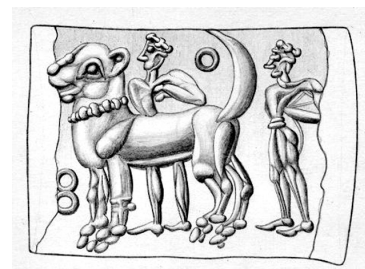
8.45 – orb rod
(XII 288/LB II-LB IIIA1)



8.46 – orb rod, bull
(I 265/LB IIIA1)



8.47 – seat, collar
(I 128/LB II-LB IIIA1)

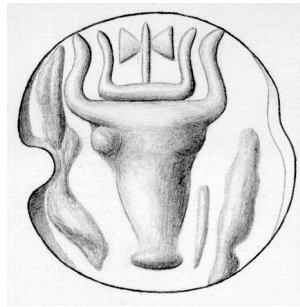


8.48 – collar, Hound Lord
(II.3 52/LB II-LB IIIA1)

Vessels, Tools and Other Small Items – *Legacy and Late Periods (cont.)*



8.49 – double horn bow
(II.3 63/LB II-LB IIIA1)



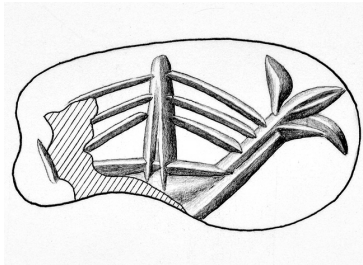
8.50 – double axe
(VS 1A 141/LM IIIA1?)



8.51 – double horns
(VS 1B 115/LB II-LB IIIA1)

Ships and Buildings, Shrines and Altars

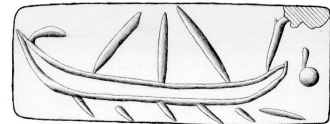
Ships and Buildings, Shrines and Altars – *Early Seal Period*



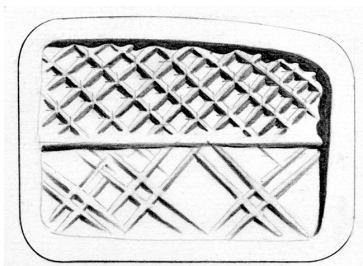
8.52 – sailing ship
(III 232b/MM II)



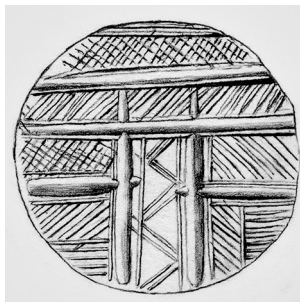
8.53 – sailing ship
(II.8 89/MM II)



8.54 – sailing ship
(VS 1B 333a/MM II)



8.55 – wickerwork
(II.1 316/EM II-EM III)



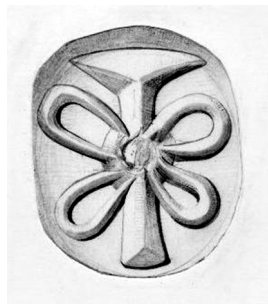
8.56 – wickerwork
(VI 170/MM II-MM III)



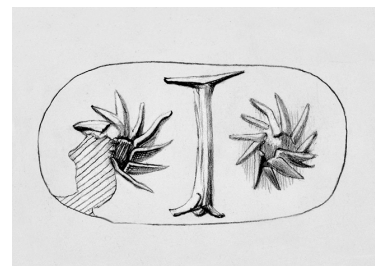
8.57 – wickerwork
(IX 36/MM II-MM III)



8.58 – barrier, ram
(XII 136/MM II-MM III)

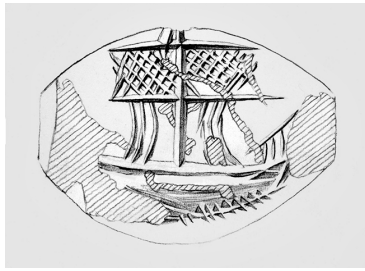


8.59 – pillar
(II.2 219b/MM II)

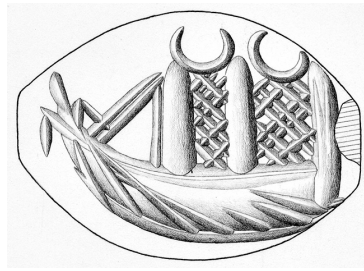


8.60 – pillar, sunbursts
(VI 86c/MM II)

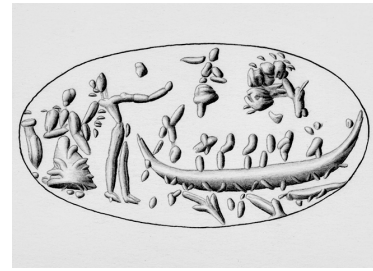
Ships and Buildings, Shrines and Altars – *Minoan High Art*



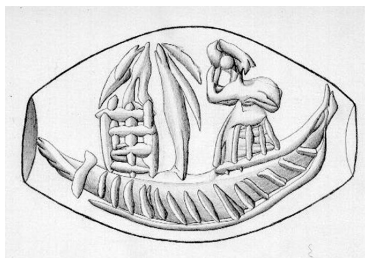
8.61 – sailing ship
(VI 467/LM I)



8.62 – ship krikion
(III 265/LM I)



8.63 – ship, sailors
(VI 280/LM I)



8.64 – grand boat
(VS 1A 55/LM I)



8.65 – town houses
(II.7 219/LM I)



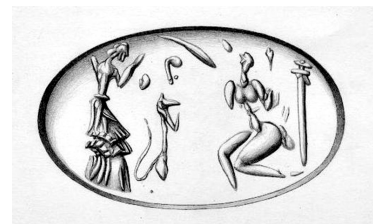
8.66 – town houses
(VS 1A 142/LM I)



8.67 – grand pillar
(VI 281/LM I)



8.68 – grand pillar
(VI 364/LB I-LB II)



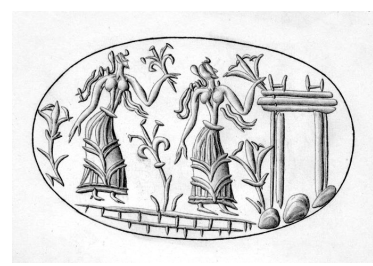
8.69 – grand pillar, Great Lady
(II.3 103/LM I-LM II)



8.70 – tree shrine
(II.6 1/LM I)



8.71 – pillar shrine
(XI 30/LB I-LB II)

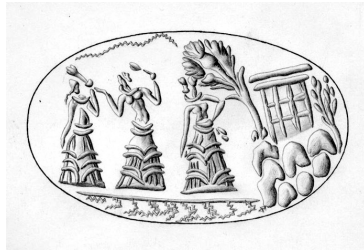


8.72 – gate shrine
(VS 1B 113/LB I-LB II)

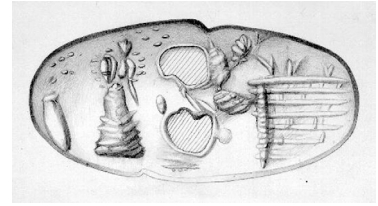
Ships and Buildings, Shrines and Altars – Minoan High Art (cont.)



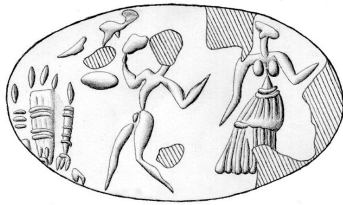
8.73 – tiered shrine
(VS 1A 176/LM I)



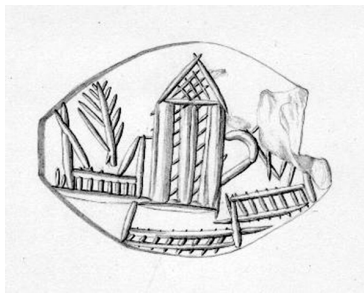
8.74 – lattice shrine
(VS 1B 114/LB I-LB II)



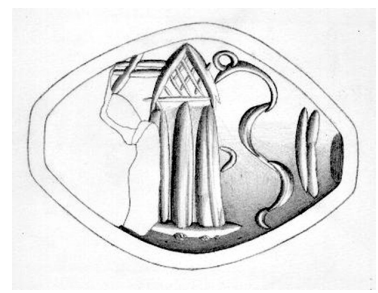
8.75 – ashlar shrine
(II.3 15/LM I)



8.76 – tripartite shrine
(VS 1B 194/LM I)



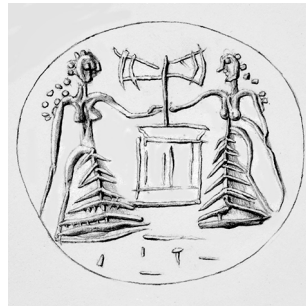
8.77 – bee smoker
(X 228/LM I)



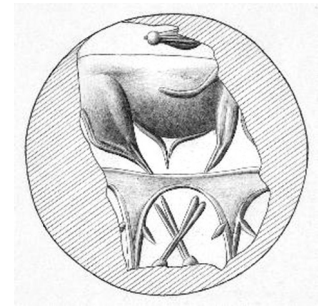
8.78 – bee smoker
(IX 86/LM I)



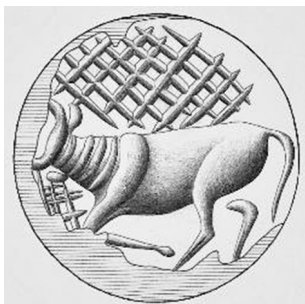
8.79 – curved altar
(I 46/LB I-LB II)



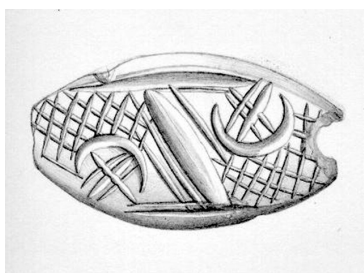
8.80 – table altar
(VI 282/LM I-LM II)



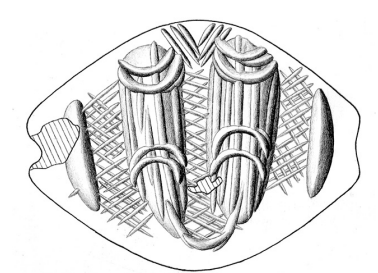
8.81 – sacrifice altar
(II.8 481/LM I-LM II?)



8.82 – barrier, bull
(II.6 48/LM I)



8.83 – wickerwork, panels
(X 110c/LM I)



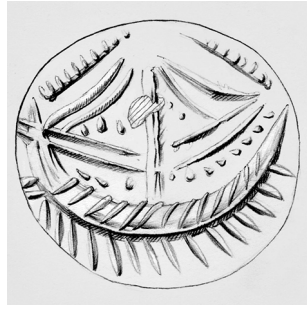
8.84 – wickerwork, bundles
(VS 3 329/LM I)

The Constructed Environment

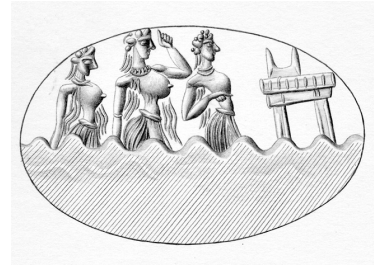
Ships and Buildings, Shrines and Altars – *Legacy and Late Periods*



8.85 – ship, sailors
(V 184b/LB II-LB IIIA1)



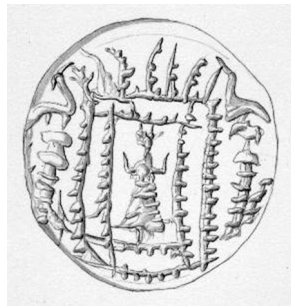
8.86 – ship
(VI 468/LM IIIA1-LM IIIA2)



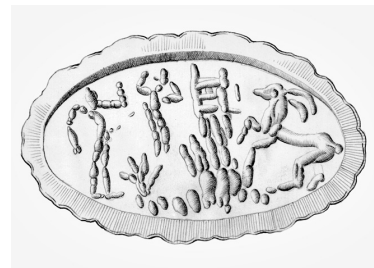
8.87 – gate shrine
(I 108/LH II-LH IIIA1)



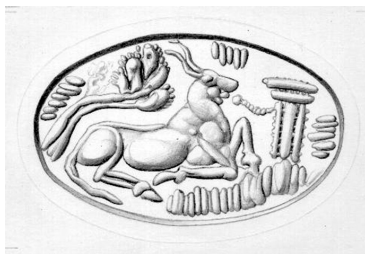
8.88 – table altar, double horns
(I 279/LB II)



8.89 – pillar shrine
(X 270/LM II-LM IIIA1)



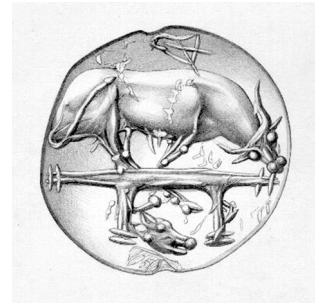
8.90 – lattice shrine
(I 292/LB IIIA1?)



8.91 – grand pillar
(V 198/LM II-LM IIIA1)



8.92 – curved altar, grand pillar
(I 98/LB II-LB IIIA1)



8.93 – sacrifice altar
(II.3 338/LB IIIA1-LB IIIA2)

Clothing for Females and Males

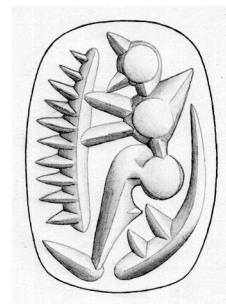
Clothing for Females and Males – *Early Seal Period*



8.94 – side-pleated skirt
(VI 92a/MM II)



8.95 – skirt
(II.5 324/MM II)



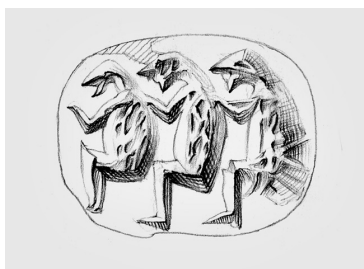
8.96 – long pants, scarf
(VS 1A 325a/MM II)

The Constructed Environment

Clothing for Females and Males – *Early Seal Period (cont.)*



8.97 – mantle?
(VI 45a/MM II)



8.98 – cloak?, hat
(VI 35c/MM II)

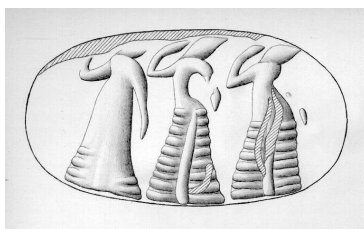


8.99 – cloak
(II.2 267c/MM II)

Clothing for Females and Males – *Minoan High Art*



8.100 – flounced skirts, frilled skirt
(II.3 51/LM I-LM II)



8.101 – frilled skirt
(VS 1A 58/LM I)



8.102 – fringed skirt
(XI 282/LM I)



8.103 – fleecy skirt
(I 226/LB I-LB II)



8.104 – lappet skirt
(V 3 68/LM I)



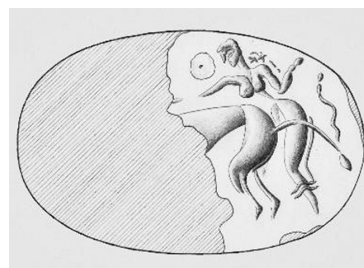
8.105 – side-pleated skirt
(VS 1A 186/LM I)



8.106 – long pants
(II.6 26/LM I)



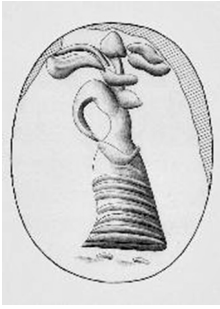
8.107 – long flounced pants
(II.6 8/LM I)



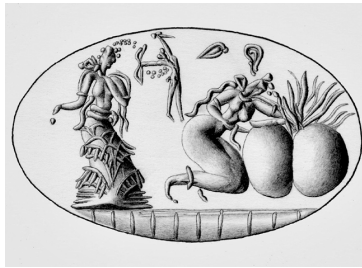
8.108 – long diaphanous pants
(II.6 35/LM I)

The Constructed Environment

Clothing for Females and Males – *Minoan High Art (cont.)*



8.109 – scarf with neck roll
(II.6 23/LM I)



8.110 – scarf knot
(VI 278/LM I)



8.111 – cape
(II.6 12/LM I)



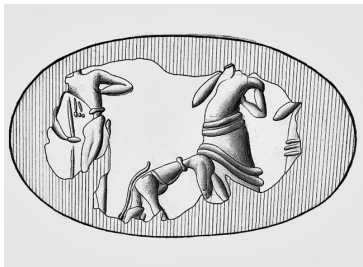
8.112 – belt, cod piece, back flap
(XI 28/LM I)



8.113 – belt
(XI 239/LM I)



8.114 – long kilt
(II.8 237/LM I)



8.115 – long kilt, belt
(II.7 3/LM I)



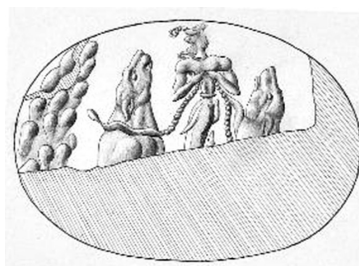
8.116 – diagonal robe
(II.8 258/LM I)



8.117 – diaphanous mantle
(II.3 16/LB I)



8.118 – double horn bow hat
(I 144/LB I-LB II)



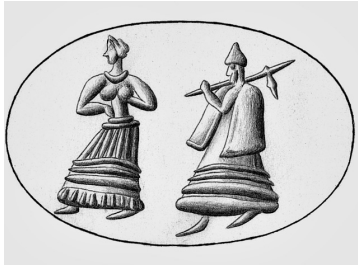
8.119 – plumed hat
(II.8 248/LM I)



8.120 – high hat
(XII 168/LM I)

The Constructed Environment

Clothing for Females and Males – *Minoan High Art (cont.)*



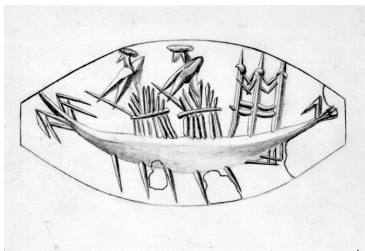
8.121 – pointed hat
(II.7 17/LM I)



8.122 – peaked hat
(II.7 16/LM I)



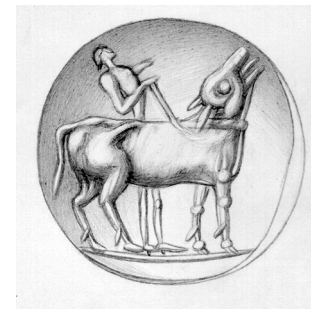
8.123 – brimmed hat
(VI 287/LM I)



8.124 – flat hat
(IS 167/LM I)



8.125 – round hat
(II.6 29/LM I)



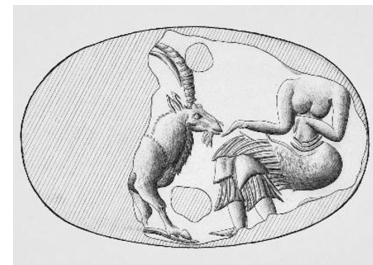
8.126 – cap hat
(VS 1A 173/LM I)



8.127 – fabric
(VS 3 38/LM I)



8.128 – tassel
(XI 26/LB I-LB II)



8.129 – girdle, flounces
(II.6 30/LM I)

Clothing for Females and Males – *Legacy and Late Period*



8.130 – flounced skirt
(I 86/LB II-LB IIIA1)

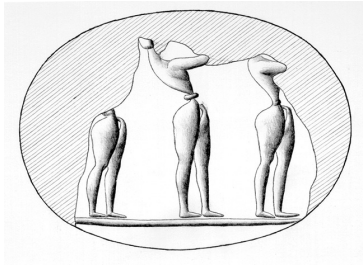


8.131 – flounced pants
(I 167/LB II-LB IIIA1)

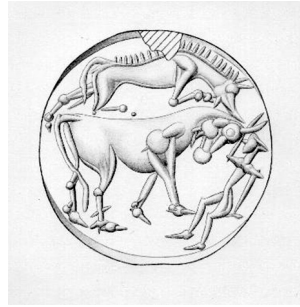


8.132 – gown
(I 162/LB IIIA1-LB IIIA2)

Clothing for Females and Males – *Legacy and Late Periods (cont.)*



8.133 – belt, man
(I 170/LB II-LB IIIA1)



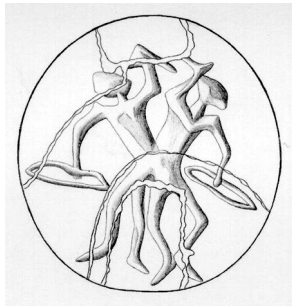
8.134 – man
(II.3 9/LM IIIA1-LM IIIA2)



8.135 – tunic
(VI 313/LB II-LB IIIA1)

Equipment for War and the Hunt

Equipment for War and the Hunt – *Early Seal Period*



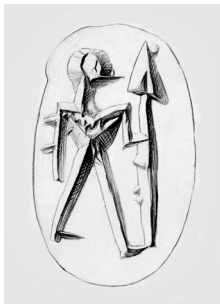
8.136 – swords, bows
(VS 1A 294/EM III-MM IA)



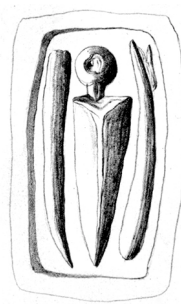
8.137 – bow, arrow
(II.2 164c/MM II)



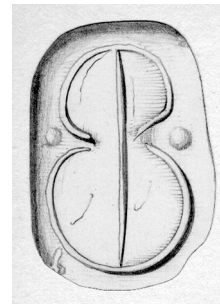
8.138 – arrow, hunter
(IV D12a/MM II)



8.139 – spear
(VI 68a/MM II)



8.140 – sword
(IV 125b/MM II)



8.141 – eight shield
(II.2 32/MM II)



8.142 – eight shield, man
(VI 60c/MM II)



8.143 – cloak, sword
(II.2 219a/MM II)



8.144 – grand spear, hieroglyphs
(X 312a/MM II)

The Constructed Environment

Equipment for War and the Hunt – *Minoan High Art*



8.145 – bow, archer
(II.6 21/LM I)



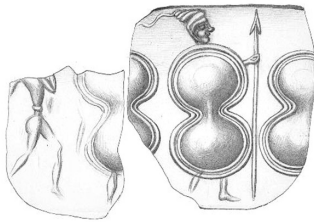
8.146 – bow
(II.6 36/LM I)



8.147 – triple horn bow
(VI 317/LB I-LB II)



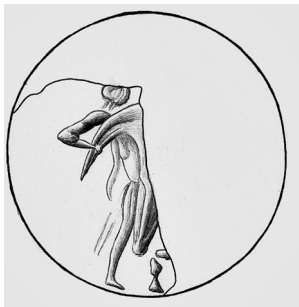
8.148 – sword, spear, tower shield
(I 16/LH I)



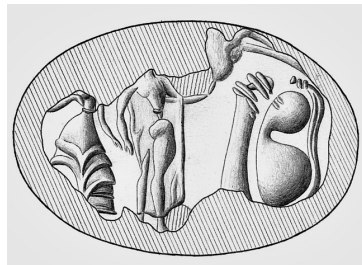
8.149 – spear, eight shield
(II.8 276/LM I?)



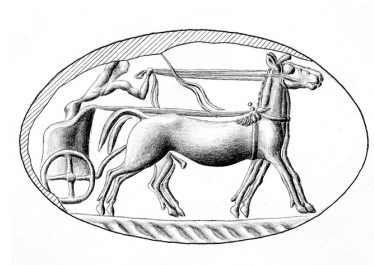
8.150 – grand spear
(II.6 37/LM I)



8.151 – man-covering defence shield
(II.7 251/LM I)



8.152 – panoply
(II.7 5/LM I)



8.153 – chariot wagon and gear
(VS 3 391/LM I)

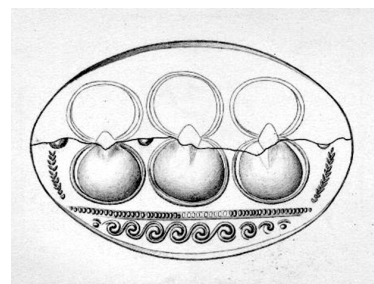
Equipment for War and the Hunt – *Legacy and Late Periods*



8.154 – sword, warrior
(IX 158/LB II-LB IIIA1)



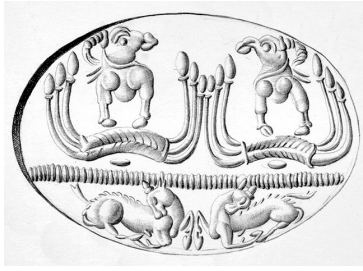
8.155 – sword, hunter
(VI 344/LB IIIA1)



8.156 – eight shield
(II.3 113/LM II-LM IIIA1)

The Constructed Environment

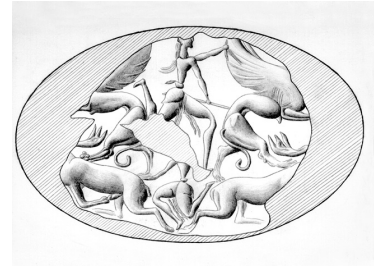
Equipment for War and the Hunt – *Legacy and Late Periods (cont.)*



8.157 – triple horn bow
(I 189/LB II-LB IIIA1)



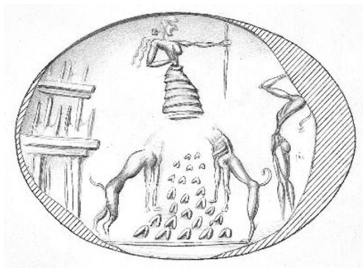
8.158 – grand spear
(V 646/LB II-LB IIIA1)



8.159 – staff, Griffin Master
(I.324/LB II-LB IIIA1)

Iconographic Interpretation: Industrious and Innovative Artisans

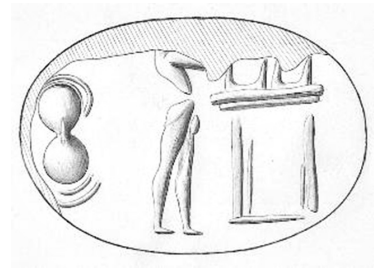
Constructed Symbols



8.160 – staff, Staff Lady
(II.8 256/LM I)

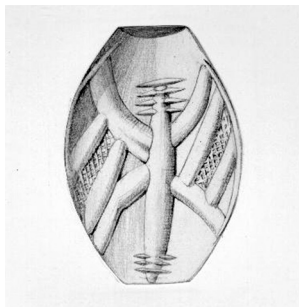


8.161 – gate pillars, lions
(II.7 74/LM I)

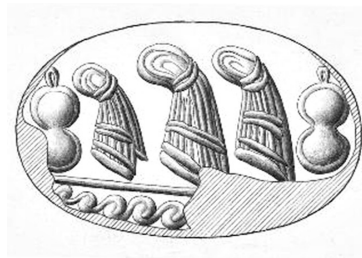


8.162 – double horns, eight shield
(II.8 272/LM I-LM II?)

Special Objects



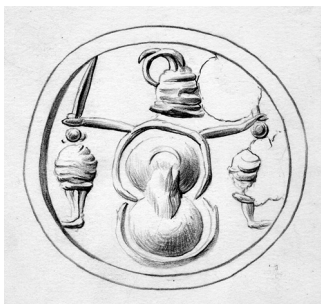
8.163 – double axe
(II.3 235/LM I)



8.164 – eight shield, cloak knot
(II.8 127/LM I)



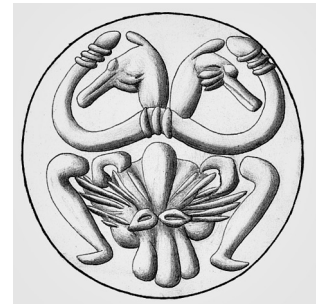
8.165 – helmet
(X 243/LM I)



8.166 – panoply
(VII 158/LB I-LB II?)



8.167 – scarf knot
(II.6 4/LM I)

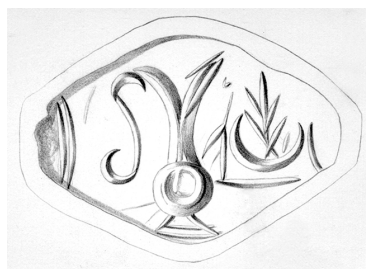


8.168 – horn bow
(II.7 199/LM I)

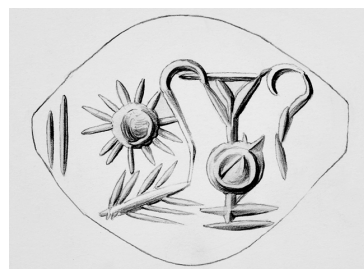
Special Objects (cont.)



8.169 – ewer, plant
(II.3 203a/LM I)



8.170 – ewer, double horns
(IV 181/LM I)



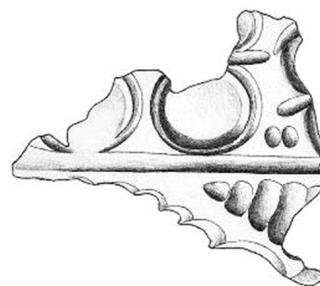
8.171 – vase, sunburst
(VI 191/LM I)



8.172 – orb rod
(VS 1A 177/LM I)

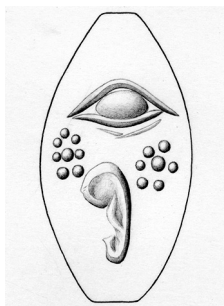


8.173 – triple bud rod
(IV D40/LB I-LB II)



8.174 – triton
(II.8 128/LM I)

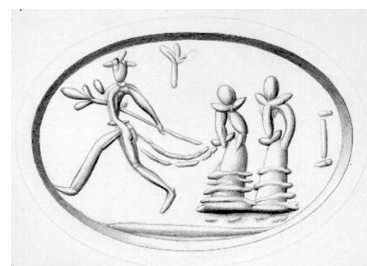
Hovering Symbols



8.175 – eye, ear
(III 502/LM I)



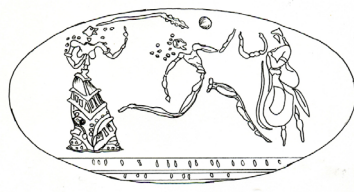
8.176 – double axe with scarf,
piriformshapes (XI 29/LM I)



8.177 – triple bud rod
(V 173/LH I-LH II)



8.178 – double axe with scarf,
piriformshape, grainshape (I 219/LM I)

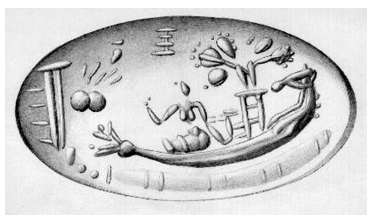


8.179 – grainshape
(Runner Ring/LM I)

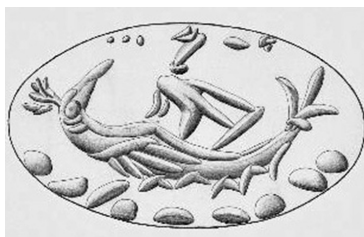


8.180 – eye, pillarshape, triple bud rod,
piriformshape (Archanes Cult Ring/LM I)

Hovering Symbols (cont.)



8.181 – pillarshape, piriformshape
(II.3 252/LM I)

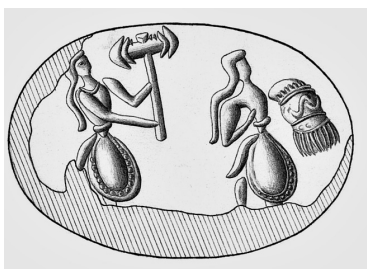


8.182 – hovering symbols
(II.6 20/LM I)



8.183 – panoply, double axe
(I 17/LB I-LB II)

The Ceremony of Presenting the Cloak



8.184 – bringing the cloak
(II.7 7/LM I)



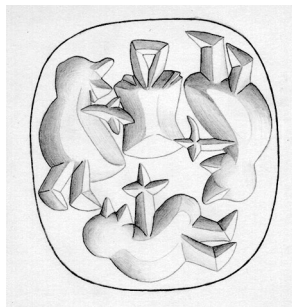
8.185 – Lady with the cloak
(II.3 8/LM I-LM II)



8.186 – Lady presenting the cloak
(II.3 145/LM I)



8.187 – bringing the cloak
(VI 320/LB I-LB II)



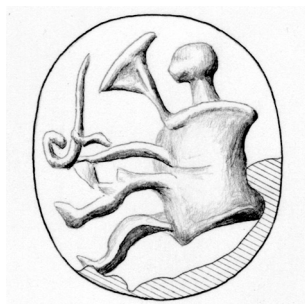
8.188 – preparing, presenting the cloak
(VS 1A 43c/MM II)



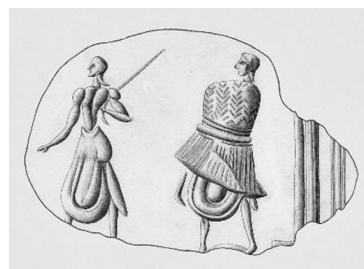
8.189 – preparing, presenting the cloak
(II.6 7/LM I)



8.190 – bringing the cloak
(VS 3 394/LM I)



8.191 – wearing the cloak
(III 214a/MM II)



8.192 – wearing the cloak
(II.6 11/LM I)

Chapter 9 The Sphere of Mortals

Human figures are depicted in seal designs across all periods and the problem is to know whether they are representing mortals or immortals. This Chapter treats the images where there are no persuasive iconographic details suggesting the figures are anything other than ordinary women and men – mortals – and they are termed here, woman and man. When there are specific iconographic details indicating that the human figures are something more than ordinary mortals, that indeed they are immortals, they are treated below in Chapter 12, The Great Gods. We turn then, in this Chapter, to the humans living their mortal life in peace and in war. We consider the images that the artists have provided showing mortals in everyday work, their social interaction and ceremonies, their athletic sports and bull sports and their participation in war and the hunt¹.

Everyday Work

Everyday Work – *Early Seal Period* (Plates 9.1 to 9.18)

Human figures, men, appear in EM III as in 9.13, 9.97 and 9.108. A burst of images from MM II shows that men and their everyday work become a main subject for the seal artists of the first palaces. These images are of stylised humans, simply shown as head, body, arms and legs, devoid of internal detail or clothing, although some images show profile facial features. These male figures hold or stand beside their tools of trade or animal, thus documenting the roles of worker, potter, porter, herder and fisherman. In 9.1 the toothed pole can be seen as a saw and its large size may well be accurate as indicating a large cross-cut saw. The tool in 9.2 can also be seen as a saw, simply re-shaped as a curve fit, and the group of workers as a team of builders marching out to fell the trees. Two roles, the potter and the porter, are given maximum coverage at this time. The potter is seen standing or sitting beside his pot, and care is taken to show whether it is jug, amphora, flask or pithos as in 9.3 to 9.6. Some indication of scale is given by the figure standing beside a huge pithos in 9.4, bringing to mind the great storage vessels found in palace magazines. The seated potter holding the amphora near a curved item in 9.5 may be working at his potter's wheel while the man granted a stool to sit upon in 9.6 is displaying the achievements of his craft. Porters are carrying loads across their shoulders on carrying poles in 9.7 to 9.9. In the same pattern as the man with tool and man with vessel, a number of depictions show the porter standing beside his carrying pole with loads, stretched out so that its full detail can be seen as in 9.10 and 9.11. As there must always be an even number of loads to balance each side when the pole is across the shoulders,

1 Search the IconAegean Database in the Element field on woman, man, stylised man, worker, potter, porter, herder, fisherman, sailor, server, bearer, processor, gesturer, boulder kneeler, tree puller, warrior, hunter, archer, tumbler, wrestler, driver, passenger and leaper. Search on the gestures, forehead, shoulder, heart, greeting, hands high, arms high, reaching and holding hands. Search the IconAegean Database in the *Icon* field on man with tool, man with vessel, man carrying loads, man with animal, man with weapon, tending the herd, aboard ship, human pair, human group, human couple, meeting, gesturing, processing, serving at the shrine, serving at the altar, carrying the special object, sacrificing on the altar, kneeling the boulder, pulling the tree, sport running, sport wrestling, leaper preparing, leaper somersaulting, leaper landing, leaper falling, leaper fallen, leaper bulldogging, warrior aiming, war duelling, hunter aiming, hunt duelling, hunt wrestling, warrior armed, warrior fallen, hunter fallen, carrying the catch, dealing with the catch and driving the chariot.

Search the IconADict Database for the definition of each term or refer to IAS.

another means of portage must be meant when the number of loads is uneven, as with the five loads in 9.10 and 9.11. When two porters between them carry a pole on their shoulders then the loads can be suspended from it and there is no requirement to have an even number of loads for balance. Portage handled this way would be very efficient in the mountainous country of Crete. Note that the loads across all these means of portage vary in shape – some are rounded or shaped like a vessel, some are pointed, some are irregular – and the number of ties connecting the loads to the pole also vary – sometimes two, sometimes three. All such detail no doubt records the actual shape of the commodity being carried and stresses the importance of this daily work. Sometimes an enigmatic portrayal will challenge description. The rare image in 9.12 may refer to a potter kneading clay or to a worker treading grapes. A very early seal shows a man with animals in 9.13. This becomes a clearer statement in MM II of a herder with animal as in 9.14 and is further detailed in the *Icon* tending the herd as in 9.15. Fishermen are seen carrying their catch, a large fish or octopus as in 9.16 and 9.17.

While discussing these early figures at work it is important to note that the hieroglyphic script sources many of its signs in human figures as with CHIC 006, the crossed arms with hands spread in 9.18. These signs include full male and female figures as well as various body parts, CHIC 001 to 010.

Everyday Work – Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art (Plates 9.19 to 9.30)

All the potters and porters seem to have gone but the roles of herder and fisherman continue and are joined by that of the sailor. The working life remains a male sphere in the images. Tending the herd continues as a favourite topic as in 9.19 to 9.24 with milking scenes and the handling of cattle and sheep. These images involve experimental poses for the male figures and much sensitive treatment of the animals. For the herders, who all treat their charges with care, the depiction of the shoulders in 9.22 and the milking poses of 9.19 and 9.20 deserve close attention. For the animals, their relationship to their herders is carefully expressed from the gentle lowing and muzzling of 9.22 and 9.23 to the bleating alarm of the mothers in 9.21 when the young are taken from them. The image in 9.20 of two herders leaning over their ewes and milking into the same bowl is accurate to true life and still seen today². Fishermen are shown as before, not in the act of fishing, but as successful in their efforts, carrying home the catch. A large fish and an octopus are held by the fisherman in 9.25, his muscular body and folded kilt well-modelled. The fisherman in 9.26 holds his splendid catch by the line while the fisherman in 9.27 holds his arm out to display a large fish. Sailors are now shown in detailed ships, actively rowing as in 9.28 and 3.78. In 9.29 a worker appears to be weaving a wickerwork barrier. If this is so, then this scene parallels the wickerwork fences in 9.15 and 8.58 and the wickerwork designs known from the early seals. In the one only example of 9.30 a woman and a man are working at a large tripod cauldron. Are they cooking or perhaps making cheese? As so often, we do not have enough examples to make sure identifications³.

Everyday Work – Legacy and Late Periods (Plates 9.31 to 9.33)

Most scenes of everyday work have disappeared. Men are still tending the herd and sailing aboard ship. A herder in 9.31 handles a large ram and another in 9.38 tethers a ewe suckling her lamb. The sailors in 9.33 each have different duties. The large figure points the way while the smaller figure handles the great steering oar.

² The image is doubled and the CMS Editors provide a photograph taken in Crete of just such a method of milking being used, CMS VS 1A 137.

³ Recognising the lack of comparisons, the LB date of this sealing covers a long period.

Processions, Worship and Ceremony

Processions, Worship and Ceremony – *Early Seal Period* (Plates 9.34 to 9.42)

Not all aspects of social interaction are thought important enough to depict. However, the early seals show pairs and groups of humans interacting with each other, as well as some formal representations which are the beginnings of ceremonies shown later in art. Standing figures may begin with a single figure as in 9.34 but there are many illustrations of pairs as in 9.35 and groups of three, often clasping arms, as in 9.36. Three or more figures in a row constitute the *Icon* procession as in 9.36 and 9.37. Many of these figures have two distinct projections from the face but it is not clear whether these represent nose and chin or an open mouth speaking, calling or singing. Two one only images, 9.38 and 9.39, indicate the figures are musicians beating drums and holding a syrinx.

Formal ceremonies are indicated in these early times in various ways. There is the procession in 9.37 where three men in the same pose of arm raised and linked to the figure in front of them stand in line behind a leader. Accordingly, many groups of three suggest that they are processors in some ceremony. Even the many pairs may be meant to be processors going two by two in a procession. The ceremony of sacrificing an animal is portrayed in 9.40 where the man reaches to the animal which is bound cross-legged with the knife between. Other images do not show the human but simply the animal, always characteristically bound cross-legged as discussed above under 6.181 to 6.189. A one only seal, 9.41, indicates a seasonal ceremony since it shows two women greeting a sunburst. Both wear special clothing and may even have masks on their heads. In 9.42 three men wear cloaks and stand in a circle, together holding another cloak with its suspension tie uppermost in an early version of the presenting the cloak ceremony discussed in the previous Chapter.

Processions, Worship and Ceremony – *Minoan High Art* (Plates 9.43 to 9.54)

Peaceful human pairs and processions continue as in 9.43 to 9.45. Two men face each other in a meeting *Icon* and gesture to each other in 9.43. A pair of figures appears in 9.44, a man wearing the warrior hide apron and a woman in a frilled skirt. Each carries a double axe and, again, these may be servers going two by two in procession. In 9.45 three women are processing to a shrine. The *Icons* of serving at the shrine and serving at the altar are regularly shown, almost always with a woman server as in 9.46 and 9.47 but with a man in 9.48. A one only depiction of obeisance is shown in 9.49 but, lacking comparisons, it is difficult to be sure of the context, as noted in the discussion on the example when illustrated as 3.76.

Four *Icons* have been created to encapsulate four of the specific ceremonies performed by mortals in Minoan Crete. The two most distinctive ceremonies, kneeling the boulder and pulling the tree, are seen in the images 9.52 and 9.53. The ceremony of presenting the cloak is recalled in 9.54 while the ceremony of sacrificing on the altar is seen in 9.50 and 9.51. These illustrations are placed here as a reminder of the four important ceremonies that have been discussed above in the Chapters appropriate to the focus of the particular ceremony.

Processions, Worship and Ceremony – *Legacy and Late Periods* (Plates 9.55 to 9.63)

At first some of the social interaction, ceremonies and processions continue to be depicted. In 9.55 two women are meeting, in 9.56 servers are processing to a shrine while in 9.57 a procession of men is depicted although their destination is not shown. The pulling the tree ceremony survives in one depiction 9.61. The ceremony of sacrificing also continues with servers officiating at a bull sacrifice in 9.58 and a boar sacrifice in 9.59. There are several images simply showing the sacrifice as in 9.60. All depictions show the large specially-shaped sacrifice altar. Very late images as in 9.62 and 9.63 show that the meeting and processing images remain in schematic depictions.

Mortals Gesturing

Mortals Gesturing – *Early Seal Period* (Plates 9.64 to 9.66)

There are fifteen gestures observable in Aegean iconography, of which eight are performed by mortals. The other seven appear to be the preserve of VIP deities and will be treated in Chapter 12⁴. The eight mortal gestures comprise three where the hand touches a body part, forehead, heart or shoulder, and five where the gesture addresses another person – greeting, hands high, arms high, reaching and holding hands. The full range of mortal gestures is displayed in Minoan High Art but some are already nascent in the early seals where the stylised human figures often hold their hands or arms in particular positions as if gesturing. In 9.64 three men are seated, each raising his arm. In this image the double leaf is repeated around the edge to provide a perimeter groundline for the men to sit upon; repeating a motif in this way is regularly done at this time. The men are to be read as seated in a circle, each raising an arm to the next figure in the greeting gesture. In 9.65 one of the men stretches his arm out in the greeting gesture while in 9.42 two women greet a sunburst. In 9.66 we may have the earliest forehead gesture where the man raises his arm to place his hand against his forehead. The holding hands gesture is also seen in the Early Seal Period as in 9.146 and 9.147.

Mortals Gesturing – *Minoan High Art* (Plates 9.67 to 9.75)

The forehead gesture may be given by a woman or a man. It is given by two women in 9.67, by a woman and a man in 9.70 and also by one of the women in 9.73. The heart gesture and the shoulder gesture appear to be given only by women. In 9.68 the woman gives the heart gesture where her arm is placed across the breast to have her hand on her heart. In 9.69 the woman gives the shoulder gesture where she bends her arm back to place her hand on her shoulder, as also seen in 9.46, 9.149 and 9.150. The most depicted gesture continues to be the greeting gesture where the arm is stretched out in front of the body and the hand is shown palm outwards. The greeting may given by a man or a woman. It may be addressed to another human as in 9.43, 9.148 and 9.155, to another creature as in 9.71 or to a VIP appearing on high as in 9.156. With the hands high gesture, both arms are bent at the elbow and raised up each side of the body as in 9.72 and with one of the women in 9.73. With the arms high gesture, both arms are stretched out and raised towards another figure, as performed by two of the women in 9.73. The reaching gesture is seen in the meeting or group Icons where a link is to be established between the figures. Thus, one figure reaches out to another as in 9.74 and 9.151. When groups are shown, the reaching gesture is often used to enliven the relationships between the figures as in 9.149, 9.150 and 9.155. The holding hands gesture always involves a female figure and a male figure as in 9.154 and with the two in the left curve of the bezel in 9.156.

Mortals Gesturing – *Legacy and Late Periods* (Plates 9.76 to 9.78)

Some of the gestures continue. The greeting gesture is seen in 9.76, the forehead gesture in 9.77 and 9.56 and the hands high gesture in profile in 9.78. The woman in the centre of 9.61 gives the hips gesture which has, to date, only been given by VIPs.

Athletic Sports and Bull Sports

Athletic Sports and Bull Sports – *Early Seal Period* (Plates 9.79 to 9.84)

The theme of athletic sports begins early before the bull sports appear. Three groups of wrestlers as in 9.40 to 9.42 introduce the Icon of sport wrestling. Often described as examples of *tete-beche* design, they are more credibly seen as wrestlers, each grasping leg or hand of his opponent. These actions intimate that more is intended than simply reversing the image as is done with, say, the porters who do not touch

⁴ The seven gestures given by VIPs are chest, hips, beckoning, power, brandishing, toasting and pointing. VIPs also share in the greeting and hands high gestures. See Chapter 12 below.

each other as in 9.11. Then there are the tumblers somersaulting as in 9.82 to 9.84 where the stylised figures seem quite acrobatic and some detail is added, with spiked hairstyles or a pigtail.

Athletic Sports and Bull Sports – *Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art* (Plates 9.85 to 9.90)

Interest in acrobatic skill continues with the tumblers somersaulting in a garden setting of papyrus plants as in 9.85. It is a lively, if highly organised, design exploiting the rectangular shape of the cushion seal and its diagonals. The tumblers appear to be wearing plumes on their heads. In 9.86 the tumbler executes the expected acrobatic roll, again with a stylised papyrus nearby. Wrestling/boxing becomes a more important topic. In 9.87 the wrestler/boxer has a most interesting pose. He strides forward, his lower body in profile and his upper body turned frontal. The careful muscling and neck alignment show that it is a frontal chest with arms reaching out and flexed⁵. A one only example of foot races is seen in 9.88 where a man and a woman watch the runner as he strides forward, his ringlets flying back with his speed.

The other great sports theme, the bull sports, begins in this Period as in 9.89 with a striking image of a leaper missing his vault. He falls down on the head of the bull, his arm over the curved-back horn, thus announcing that bull leaping is a dangerous game. In 9.90 the athleticism of the leapers somersaulting and landing is striking. There are various action plays in the bull sports and, in order to record the sequence fully, the seal artists create a set of six *Icons* that comprise the bull sports set: leaper preparing, leaper somersaulting, leaper landing, leaper falling, leaper fallen and leaper bulldogging. The four *Icons*, somersaulting, landing, falling and fallen, are illustrated in the examples 9.157 to 9.168, and show that the best bull sports images remaining to us are all on LM I seals, both for the poses of the leaper and the anatomy of the bull. The bulls are almost always extended in the flying gallop, as clearly seen in 9.157 to 9.160, 9.164 and 9.168. The full oval horizontal of the seal face is used to reveal the bulk and vitality of the bull with its genitals carefully delineated. Sometimes the bull is propped stationary as in 9.162 and 9.166 and sometimes the bull's head is turned frontal as in 9.160, 9.161 and 9.166. For the leaper, acrobatic skill is displayed in every pose, body at full stretch or arced over or contorted. The most popular *Icons* are those of the successful leaps, the leaper somersaulting and the leaper landing. Note how the leaper is never in contact with the bull. The leaper times the head-long rush of the bull and his leap so that he is safely in mid-flight as the bull rushes beneath him⁶. In real time it is impossible to land on the bull's back and somersault off again and the seal images testify to this⁷. Failed leaps are graphically shown with the leaper transfixed on the horns or trampled beneath the bull, limbs awry or unnaturally extended as in 9.166 to 9.168. The consummate artist of 9.167 has left us the most graphic depiction of the agony of the leaper who fails.

Athletic Sports and Bull Sports – *Legacy and Late Periods* (Plates 9.91 to 9.96)

The athletic sports theme continues in 9.91 where tumblers are placed antithetically about a papyrus thicket. The bull sports theme also continues although there are some notable changes to its presentation. The two Minoan seals, 9.92 and 9.93, give a reasonable idea of the somersaulting but the bulls are now much more constrained within the circular lentoid shape. In 9.96 an attempt to portray the leaper somersaulting and the leaper fallen in the same composition results in a rather static portrayal. Examples of the two *Icons*, leaper preparing and leaper bulldogging, are seen in 9.94 and 9.95. The leaper in 9.94 stands motionless, his arms raised as he sights the bull in preparation for his somersault, as is still done by gymnasts when launching the run to the vault. In 9.95 the leaper is trying to wrestle the bull to the

⁵ The surface of the sealing makes it difficult to read but the identification as a back torso is least likely.

⁶ See the videos of modern bull-leaping events in Portugal, YouTube, Jumping over Bulls, 27 February 2009.

⁷ The bronze statue of the bull and bull leaper, PM IV 221, Fig. 155, does show the leaper coming down on the bull's back, and this has led to Evans' misunderstanding of the leap, followed by Younger 1976, 125-137. The attachment of leaper to bull here has more to do with the need to have the two figures in contact for the casting process of the metal statue than it has to do with recording the nature of the leap.

ground by grasping neck and horns and throwing his full weight on the beast, just as modern cowboys do in the bulldogging events at rodeos. The fact that we have to wait until this later period to see the other two *Icons* of the bull sports set may be simply the lack of preservation that has denied us examples in Minoan High Art.

War and the Hunt

War and the Hunt – *Early Seal Period* (Plates 9.97 to 9.108)

The activities of war and the hunt have always been tied together since the skills and the mindset required by both overlap. Various hunt and war themes begin early and are continued throughout the art. A very early seal, 9.97, begins the war theme with a duelling scene showing two warriors holding bows and attacking each other with daggers or swords. This early action piece is paralleled by images which focus on the hunter or warrior with his identifying weapon, the bow or spear as in 9.98 to 9.102. Then the hunt sequence is initiated as in 9.103 to 9.108. Note the bow held up and about to release the arrow in 9.103, the carrying pole with agrimi catch balanced on each side in 104 and the agrimi mortally wounded by the arrow in 9.105. In 9.103 the hunter is accompanied by his hound in an early portrayal of this trusted association explained in the discussion of the hound in Chapter 6 above. In 9.104 the *Icon* of carrying the catch notes the success of the hunter. In 9.105 the *Icon* of dealing with the catch shows the hunter holding his agrimi quarry already killed by the arrow. In this hunt sequence the skill and success of the hunter is celebrated. Yet, the danger of the hunt is the main thrust of the images of the hunter fallen as in 9.106 and 9.107, in both cases falling prey to lions. A hunt scene may also be intended in 9.108 where the man and lions are placed on the perimeter groundline each side of patterned foliage and there is a triangular shape pointing at the lions which could be a sword or spear point.

War and the Hunt – *Minoan High Art* (Plates 9.109 to 9.132)

War and warrior scenes become favourite subjects. Warriors in the pair and processing *Icons* now march out, presumably to battle, as in 9.109 and 9.110. They wear plumed helmets, carry their spears and are protected by their eight shields. In 9.112 and 9.113 warriors wear the body armour of the hide apron while in 9.113 the long protective back flap is clearly seen. In 9.111 a large defensive shield is shown. Driving the chariot now becomes an *Icon* as in 9.114 allowing warriors to be transported to battle. Aggressive battle scenes are rendered in the war duelling *Icon* as in 9.115 to 9.119. The most telling depictions are those which display the climactic point of the delivery of the fatal blow as in 9.115 to 9.117 and 2.32 and 2.33. The brutality and loss of war are epitomised in the warrior fallen *Icon* as in 9.115 to 9.117 and 2.33. In some of the LB I-LB II examples the war theme is shown in more static forms as in 9.120. In all, war is presented in the set of *Icons* detailing the sequence of battle: driving out or processing out to battle, warrior aiming, war duelling and warrior fallen.

Hunt scenes are shown in 9.121 to 9.132 where spirited hunting encounters are rendered in the hunt duelling, hunter aiming and hunter fallen *Icons* while the result of the successful hunt is shown in the dealing with the catch *Icon*. A bearded hunter (or warrior) is featured as head profile with his bow and arrow in 9.125. The quarry for the hunt may be lion, bull or agrimi. When it is a lion as in 9.121 to 9.123 and 2.34, the animal is raised up on its hind legs to match the stature of the man and thus prove a meet adversary for the hunter hero as if it were a duel between two warriors. In most cases the hunter is clothed only in a belt and kilt, thus showing his outstanding bravery in not using armour or a shield. The hunt wrestling icon in 9.124 shows the strength of the hunter who can, barehanded, bring a magnificent agrimi to the ground, albeit aided by his sturdy hound. The mortal danger faced by the hunter is graphically portrayed in 9.126 where the hunter is trampled under the hooves of the great bull caught in the net. The hunter's skill with the spear is documented in the hunter aiming *Icons* of 9.127 to 9.129. The hunt scenes in 9.129 and 9.130 also include the trusty hound companion and place all in convincing landscape of trees and rocky ground. The final act of the hunt is documented in the dealing

with the catch *Icon* as in 9.130 to 9.132 where the agrimi, bull and lion are the quarry. The successful hunt is presented here in the set of *Icons* following the sequence of attack: hunter aiming, hunt duelling and dealing with the catch. The unsuccessful hunt is recorded in the hunter fallen *Icon*. The remaining *Icon* in the hunt set is carrying the catch when the catch is a mammal quarry, not a fish. As it is seen in the previous Period and will be seen again in the next Period, the gap in portrayal in Minoan High Art is likely to be due to the vicissitudes of the preservation of material.

War and the Hunt – *Legacy and Late Periods* (Plates 9.133 to 9.144)

The themes of war and the hunt are strong enough to continue into the Legacy Period along with several of the *Icons* that have organised their depiction since the Early Seal Period. The war duelling *Icon* is seen in both 9.133 and 9.134. A warrior fallen is seen in 9.134. The chariot scene in 9.135 shows the driver with his whip urging on the steeds. Hunt scenes are numerous and varied. Hunt duelling is best seen in 9.136 where the hunter attacks a huge agrimi and also in 9.140. The successful hunt is documented by the carrying the catch and dealing with the catch *Icons*. In 9.137 the hunter uses a carrying pole to bring home his trophies of boar and agrimi while in 9.141 the genius is the hunter carrying the bull catch over his shoulder. In 9.138 the hunter is dealing with his great agrimi catch, already dead on its back. The ever-present danger of the hunt is seen in the hunter fallen *Icons*. The hunter in 9.139 is being trampled by a huge and ferocious boar, his body twisted awkwardly and his legs flailing in the air. In many late sealings, there seems to be a resurgence of interest in having the lion as the combat animal facing the brave hunter. In 9.142 and 9.143 two hunters each wrestle a lion barehanded. The hunt scene in 9.144 shows the hunters arriving by chariot and the main hunter again wrestling the lion barehanded.

Iconographic Interpretation: Mortals Beautiful, Pious and Brave

When we come to interpret the roles of women and men as presented in the seal designs we note that the subject of the lives of mortals is not the first choice of subject matter. The natural world – earth, plants and animals – provides the first images, along with integrated geometric designs. Although human figures are known early, it is not until the last phase of the Early Seal Period that the activity of humans becomes an important subject with the depiction of the stylised figures as servers, workers, hunters and warriors. In the Experimentation and Minoan High Art Periods some of the working roles are discarded while peaceful scenes of meetings, processions and ceremonies are developed along with scenes of athletic endeavour, the hunt and war. The new activity of the bull sports appears. The Legacy Period continues the war, hunt, and bull sports themes, but only some of the everyday and ceremonial activities. These changes will be considered in Chapter 14. We proceed now with the interpretation of the Minoan images.

It is in the images of the era of the building of the first palaces that we see the activities of humans coming into prominence. Everyday work becomes a major subject but it is not the work of women. We look in vain for expected images of women spinning or weaving, tasks that take up so much of women's lives in pre-industrial societies. Everyday work is shown as the work of men. The roles of potter and porter predominate, each man being shown beside his creation or his tool of trade, with considerable detail given to the various pot shapes and load shapes as in 9.3 to 9.11. In similar compositions the men with the toothed poles can be seen as builders with saws. As the great beams of the palaces had to be cut and milled from the Cretan forests, it makes sense for the artists to include a building role in their depiction of the workday world. Indeed, the stress given to the builder, potter and porter images should be seen as a celebration of the great construction projects which produced the first palaces and facilitated the trade between these emerging centres. There are also one only examples of workers who may be wine-makers in 9.12 and musicians in a band in 9.38, thus suggesting a wider workforce. The roles of herder and fisherman are documented as in 9.13 to 9.17. It is also at this time that we see the first intimations of ceremony. To the many images of sacrificed animals we now see a figure officiating as in 9.40. The presentation of the cloak is foreshadowed in 9.42. Reading three figures in a row as figures processing

in a file is a reasonable interpretation. However, we are not shown what they are processing towards and probably not all of them are marching out to work. In several cases the men have their arms around each other's shoulders as in 9.36 or have an arm raised to connect them back to a leader figure as in 9.37. So these depictions of three figures may be representing a traditional line dance. The many images of pairs may also represent a procession. Mindful of the ever-present problem of limited space on the seal face, the artists give us pairs but they, and their viewers, may easily be seeing processions. In traditional ceremonies and processions, participants regularly go two by two and the many pairs with both figures in the same pose may be representing just that. Some of these interactions reveal the first gestures being given with the greeting, forehead and holding hands gestures being shown. The Icon of the human couple is first seen in 9.145 to 9.147. The themes of athletic sports are depicted in a lively manner with the wrestlers and tumblers in 9.79 to 9.84 while the exploits of war and the hunt are given graphic portrayals in the sequence 9.97 to 9.108. All these busy little figures on the early seals have often been passed over as not telling us much about Minoan life. However, this is not seen to be the case when we take a closer look at the variety of the images. Already in this protopalatial period the artists have defined the roles of mortals in peace and war as gesturer, processor, tumbler, herder, fisherman, porter, potter, worker, archer, wrestler, hunter and warrior. At the same time the depictions of ceremonial processions and animal sacrifice begin the record of pious observances.

When we turn to the images of mortals in the Experimentation and Minoan High Art Periods we see a significant change. Women emerge as full members of the society. They are now widely represented in the images of social interaction and ceremony as in 9.43 to 9.54 and 9.67 to 9.75. They take their place beside men in the generic processions, also shown as pairs, where both may be bearers carrying symbols like the double axe. In the important ceremonies of kneeling the boulder discussed in Chapter 4 and pulling the tree discussed in Chapter 5 a woman can be the officiant as can a man. The human couple is featured as in 9.145 to 9.156 where a woman and a man are given equal stature. Women almost exclusively represent the pious Minoan community in acts of worship at special buildings which are portrayed by the two *Icons* of serving at the shrine and serving at the altar. A woman and a man are needed for the holding hands gesture but either can give the greeting, reaching, forehead, heart or hands high gestures. Only women seem to give the shoulder gesture and the arms high gesture. Now, when women are giving the hands high and arms high gestures they have often been interpreted as dancing as in 9.72 and particularly in 9.73. However, there is no attempt to show their feet as other than flat on the ground although artists are quite able to show pointed feet as movement in other contexts. There is no attempt to show clothing registering a moving body. The shape of the women in 9.73 is easily explained by their own clothed body shape. It seems more in keeping with the visual record simply to regard these women as gesturing to each other, not dancing⁸. So, in review of the role of women as shown in Minoan High Art, we can say that it is not simply that women are present beside the men in these many images but rather that they regularly take an active protagonist role. They are the processors and bearers in pairs and processions. They are the boulder kneelers and tree pullers in those two significant ceremonies, and they are, almost exclusively, the servers and gesturers at shrine and altar. For social interaction and in peaceful ceremonies and worship, the move across to predominantly women actors is striking.

In the Experimentation and Minoan High Art Periods the occupations of men remain those of earlier times although there are fewer depictions of everyday work while those of athletic prowess, of war and the hunt and the bull sports claim most attention. The palace building roles of the Early Seal Period are no more but some of the workday images continue. The competent herder is shown in 9.19 to 9.24 while successful fishermen are celebrated in 9.25 to 9.27. Although ships and seafaring have been subjects from the earliest images, the role of sailor is now made explicit as in 9.28. However, the main occupation for men is to participate in war, the hunt, athletic sports and the bull sports. The depictions of the themes of war and the hunt are increased in number as seen across 9.109 to 9.130 where the war

⁸ The dancing interpretation probably has more to do with stories of Ariadne dancing and the so-called Dance Fresco at Knossos in its reconstructed form, AP, Plate 23, than it has to do with what is actually being depicted.

duelling and hunt duelling *Icons* emphasise the ferociousness of hand-to-hand combat⁹. Driving the chariot as in 9.114 becomes a powerful *Icon* as the Minoan war machine takes up the prestige weapon and creates the new roles of driver and passenger. The earlier roles of tumbler and wrestler continue as in 9.85 and 9.86 but now we also see the runner as in 9.88. There is the whole new theme of the bull sports providing the most dangerous role of the leaper as in 9.89 and 9.90 and 9.157 to 9.168. Then there are the three ceremonies where attendance is a male prerogative. The officiant at the animal sacrifice ceremony discussed in Chapter 6 is a man although rarely depicted. When he appears he is a rather humbler worker identified by leggings. The preference is to portray the ceremony in the animal sacrificed *Icon* where the bound animal is featured, sometimes placed on the sacrifice altar, and this allows the important ceremony to be acknowledged without stressing the role of the male officiant. In the other two male-oriented ceremonies, the protagonists are duly celebrated. The ceremony of presenting the cloak, discussed in Chapter 8, portrays the personnel as appropriately caparisoned leaders ready for war and the hunt. The protagonist in the leaping the bull ceremony, discussed below, is a man of extraordinary skill and bravery.

The Ruling Elite

Who then are these women and men who lead the Minoan community, who organise the disciplined preparation for military expeditions in war, who maintain the careful observance of ceremony in peace? Who are these men and women who gesture to each other and to VIP figures? Who are the warriors and hunters, the processors and bearers, the servers at altar and shrine and the officiants at the five ceremonies of animal sacrifice, kneeling the boulder, pulling the tree, presenting the cloak and leaping the bull? They are not delineated by facial detail which gives them individual identities. The short burst of male heads seen in the Experimentation Period has not provided secure evidence of an interest in portraiture which might have been seen as elevating a man to elite status; and of course there are no women so delineated¹⁰. Instead, they are differentiated as a group by depiction of body form and dress. Women and men are clothed in splendid garments, their hair is coiffured, they wear jewellery and they possess additional enhancements of capes and mantles, scarves and cloaks. The women wear long pants, maybe diaphanous pants, and choose between skirts flounced, fringed, frilled, fleecy and side pleated, and hats high, pointed, brimmed and peaked. The men wear their minimal belt and codpiece but can add a kilt and, when going into battle, can choose from the protective array of the hide apron and a variety of helmets and shields. The intricate nature of Minoan clothing, discussed in Chapter 8 above, makes it clear that the detail of weave and cut, ribbon and bow was deeply appreciated, as was the detail of war accoutrements for males in leather, metal, and especially the woven cloak. All the actors here are of the same level of opulence, setting them apart from the relatively small number of workers, herders and fishermen depicted at this time who wear fewer and simpler items of clothing. We can only come to the conclusion that the ruling elite of the Minoan community are a group of women and men who see themselves as equals and who see that they have duties of leadership which are undertaken as they wear their very best clothes.

The sumptuous clothing and the formidable battle gear appear to belong to many people in this leadership group, with seemingly no item which distinguishes or elevates one woman or one man above others. Individuals are not singled out by facial differentiation. In many instances where a member of the ruling elite undertakes ceremonial duties, the face is just a shape, with much more effort spent on showing the coiffure and the clothing, as when kneeling the boulder in 4.109 to 4.117 and pulling the tree in 5.121 to 5.127. Thus, we must conclude that individual identity is not as important as the role being enacted. Furthermore, there are no equivalents of crowns or robes worn by only one particular figure to signify a king or a queen. There are no items of regalia that might have been held by monarchs

9 For discussion on hunting in Minoan Crete and its status as an elite pursuit see Krzyszkowska 2014a, 341-347.

10 See the discussion on portraiture in Chapter 3 above.

to display their authority. The staff, triple bud rod and orb rod belong to other figures, either divine or fantastic, to be discussed below. So, we must face the import of the oft-remarked-upon absence of ruler iconography in Minoan Crete¹¹. We also must acknowledge that there is no evidence of a priestly caste in Minoan society. There are no images of certain figures robed in particular garments officiating at identifiable religious ceremonies. The figures clad in the diagonal robe were declared to be priests long ago by Arthur Evans, and the nomenclature has remained¹². However, none of these figures is ever seen leading a procession or officiating in any of the scenes of worship at shrine or altar, and none is ever the protagonist in any of the five defining ceremonies. The male figure wearing the diagonal robe is always shown standing in calm pose, isolated from any work or action, and he needs to be rescued from the erroneous “priest” label. He is identified as a god in Chapter 12. Accordingly, with no identifiable kings or queens and no identifiable priestesses or priests, we can only conclude that the society is ruled by an elite class who perform these administrative, military and priestly roles. Membership of this ruling elite may well come through clan association or aristocratic family, as one may expect for such an early community. It may come through recognition of excellence in the military and sports arenas. Perhaps designation of particular duties is reliant on drawing lots. Information on how an individual gains membership of the ruling elite evades us at present. However, the seal images do reveal that the Minoan ruling elite comprises both women and men who set high standards of dress and performance for themselves as they fulfil their duties in peace and in war.

The Minoan Ideal for a Woman and for a Man

As a member of the ruling elite, what are the demands on a woman or a man? What are the desired qualities that epitomise the Minoan ideal? The Minoan woman is fair of face and body and is indeed most elaborately coiffured and clothed and bedecked with jewellery. She is also extremely pious, serving at altar and shrine and officiating at important ceremonies. Again, there are no indications of royal status like crowns or priestess robes although the very richness of her costuming and the special nature of her activities bespeaks of her leadership role. All in all, the Minoan male is very well turned out from the top of his head to the tips of his toes. His lean muscled body always has the correct accoutrements for war – belt, kilt, robe, armour, helmet and cloak – as well as the appropriate attire for peace – coiffure, jewellery, necklace, bracelet, armlet and anklet. It is a pity that in English we have no word for male beauty. We slide off into words like handsome, manly, or some such periphrasis. Perhaps we should just take the example of the inflected languages and say, beautiful male. Yet the calling for an elite male is to war, the hunt and the bull sports¹³. For these he must be trained and his skill tested¹⁴. Only then will he have the courage to face his fate.

From our investigations of the images so far we can say that the women and men of the ruling elite are portrayed in the full beauty of youth. It is, however, a youth that is mature, with the women full-bosomed and the men of fighting age. The seals do not dwell on images of children or older folk.

11 See in particular the papers given at the 1992 Conference, *The Role of the Ruler in the Prehistoric Aegean* published in RULER.

12 Arthur Evans believed that the priest and priest-king identity was the same. He discussed priests/priest-kings widely and saw the long robe as the indicator of their status. See his discussion on the seal showing a robed figure with a griffin, PM II, 785, Fig. 512 (CMS I 223). Robert Koehl gives a summary of the various identifications of priests that have been made over the years in his section on “Rhyta and Priests” in Koehl 2006, 337-342. The seal quoting a sacrifice scene is CMS I 80 not CMS I 223, and the garment is a simple tunic. Many researchers still accept the Evans declaration that the long robed figures are priests and also the eastern link with the Syrian fenestrated axe. See further discussion in Chapter 12 below.

13 In her essay, “The Ideals of Manhood in Minoan Crete”, Nanno Marinatos gathers these same three avenues of endeavour. I concur with her assessments on the prestige of manhood and the evidence of male authority in Crete, AWP, 149-158.

14 Robert Koehl discusses the military training of Minoan youths and their subsequent rites of passage, Koehl 2016, 113-132.

In Minoan Crete the Ideal Man is handsome, skilled and brave, a bull leaper, hunter and warrior. In Minoan Crete the Ideal Woman is beautiful and pious, exquisitely gowned to perform her ritual roles.

Private Lives (Plates 9.145 to 9.156)

As we have already commented, men and women are shown together in Minoan High Art parading in processions and participating in ceremonies together in a show of equality that is somewhat rare in ancient traditional societies. Yet, there is an additional set of images that appears to show a woman and a man enjoying a special relationship, most clearly expressed in the human couple *Icon* which is a memorable image of a woman and a man close together and linked in some way, usually by the gesture of holding hands. The two early seal examples, 9.146 and 9.147, are their first clear expression. The different treatment of his and her hair, the depiction of the woman's patterned skirt and the spray she wears in her hair give added life to the figures. There is no doubting the closeness of the pair in each image. In 9.145, an even earlier seal, a couple are shown embracing, and it has been argued that this is a scene of coitus. It could be so, but since the vital section of anatomies is missing and there are no comparable images to provide a check, it is probably better to regard the image simply as the first example of the human couple *Icon*.

The human couple *Icon* has several depictions in Minoan High Art. The close relationship of the man and woman is signified by the holding hands gesture as in 9.154 and 9.156 and possibly also in 9.151¹⁵, by the heart gesture by the woman as in 9.148¹⁶, 9.149 and 9.151, by the reaching gesture of the man as in 9.153 and in 9.155, and by the greeting gesture of the man as in 9.148 and 9.152. In 9.155 the central figures of warrior and VIP appearing on high are flanked by a woman and a man, paired by being positioned in the opposite curves of the bezel and by addressing the central figures with greeting and reaching gestures. The linking of the woman and man with a bow to be a couple as in 9.150 is a one only example and its possible significance was addressed in Chapter 3 above. In 9.149 and 9.150 the woman wears the lappet skirt which is seen as a marker of her availability for marriage¹⁷. The importance of the couple relationship is underlined by their being the only subjects in the scene or, in scenes with other participants, by those participants' focussing their attention on the couple. Other inclusions in the compositions also testify to the importance of the couple. In 9.148 the scene is set before a tree shrine with the sunburst shining overhead. In 9.154 the couple salutes a panoply. In 9.152 the couple stands beside a double boulder with plants.

Any interpretation of these images must recognise the exceptional nature of the holding hands gesture. In a traditional society, it would be improper for a man and a woman to be shown touching each other. Think of the scandal that erupted in modern times when the waltz was introduced as a dance where a man holds a woman close in his arms! In a traditional society the holding hands gesture can only be seen as the representation of a marriage or of a married couple. Where the man and woman are facing each other and linked with heart or greeting gestures it may be the actual marriage ceremony. The other images showing a man and woman close together are those of a married couple at some sensitive point in their lives like a farewell before the husband departs for war. In 9.151 and 9.152 the couple spend a quiet time in a sacred place while in 9.154 the couple salute the panoply which will soon guard him from death in battle. In 9.155 the couple surround a fully armed warrior as the woman greets a VIP deity appearing on high. Is this a mother and father couple farewelling their son to war and committing him into the care of a powerful god?

So far we have interpreted all these woman and man couple images as referring to their private lives, but is this necessarily so? The other grandly clothed men and women in scenes of procession, worship

15 Although the sealing impression is faint, the woman is giving the heart gesture and both give the reaching gesture which may actually be a holding hands gesture.

16 In this impossibly small seal it is difficult to be sure of the woman's arm positions.

17 See the discussion on the significance of the lappet skirt in the Interpretation section of Chapter 8 above.

and ceremony are seen as representatives of their community, keeping it safe through war and pious observances. It is possible that in these seemingly private moments – moments applicable to all humans – the women and men are also representing their society? The couple holding hands in the very public departure of the ship in 9.156 would seem to suggest this representative role for an elite married couple. In farewelling the ship and its crew, perhaps it is as the community leaders that they greet the VIP appearing on high and address prayers to provide a safe and successful voyage. Again, we cannot be sure of the exact meaning of this set of images because we do not have the explanatory gloss of accompanying text.

The Ceremony of Leaping the Bull (Plates 9.157 to 9.168)

The ceremony of leaping the bull provides the ultimate test of bravery for the Minoan man¹⁸. In Chapter 3 we discussed the creation of the bull sports set and sequence comprising six *Icons* carefully crafted to express each of the high points of danger faced by the leaper in the bull sports: preparing, somersaulting, landing, falling, fallen and bulldogging¹⁹. The leaper goes to the bull knowing full well that he may be successful or may fail – and die in the process. Look closely at the selection of LM I images 9.157 to 9.168 for the best portrayals of the four most often depicted *Icons* of the bull leaping. Cheer for leaper executing the high somersault and landing. Groan aghast for the leaper falling or fallen with terrible and fatal wounds²⁰. There is no doubt that this spectacular event is a celebration of the skill and courage of the bull leaper. Yet is there more? What is the role of the bull? Even the most cursory glance at these same images reveals that it is the bull that is the most significant presence in each *Icon*. The bull takes up most of the space in each image. It is a magnificent animal, the bulk of its body and explicit genitals giving testimony to its being in the prime of life. Its flying gallop pose with legs extended is joined with raised horns and tail to give a rectangular shape which hurtles through the space, dominating the whole seal face shape. In contrast, the human is slight of build and often only partly shown in the leap through arms or legs or flying hair. Is then the bull really the main subject, and if so, who or what is the bull?

Placing the bull at the centre of interest, just as it is at the centre of the image, allows us to see it as a powerful being, even a supernatural force. In Chapter 12 the bull is seen as the avatar of a powerful deity, the Bull Lord. This reading of the *Icons* reveals the bull sports as a ceremony of worship where the mortal can access the other world of the gods. The skill of the leaper allows him to commune with the deity even as he anticipates the bull's violent motion. The bull is the Bull Lord and the leaper is his worshipper in this ceremonial dance of death that unites them both.

18 The bull leapers on the seals can all be identified as male. The seals do not show colour and all images depict the leaper as male in body form and clothing. However, in some frescoes, the fact that some leapers have white skin raises the possibility that there might have been female leapers. If the colour code for humans – red skin for males and white skin for females – holds in this instance then we would have a female bull leaper, with an explanation required for her not having the expected body form of the Minoan mature female. The white-skinned leapers would need to be pre-puberty females for the body shape to be appropriate, and she would need to don male garb. For discussion of the colour convention and the sexed body see Chapin 2012, 297-304.

19 See the section on Layering Meaning through Icons in Chapter 2 above.

20 For pertinent comparisons between the bull sports scenes at Knossos and Tell el-Dab'a see Bietak, Marinatos and Palyvou 2007.

Comparisons with Images in Other Media

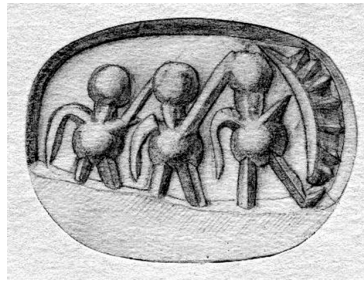
1. Clay figure of a woman giving the heart gesture from Piskokephalo.
CM, Plate 17.
2. Bronze statue of a man giving the forehead gesture from the Skoteino Cave.
FLL, Plate 179.
3. Scenes of boxers, wrestlers and bull leapers on the conical relief rhyton from Hagia Triada.
CM, Plates 106 and 107.
4. The attack on a city on the silver Siege Rhyton from Mycenae.
CM, Plate 174.
5. Restored wall painting showing a procession of women gift bearers from Thebes.
AP, Plate XXI.

Plates 9.1 to 9.168

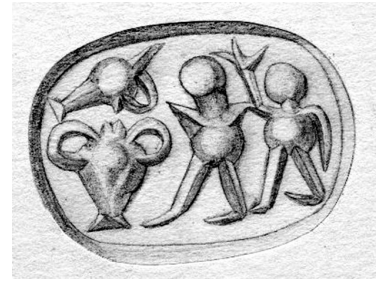
Everyday Work – *Early Seal Period*



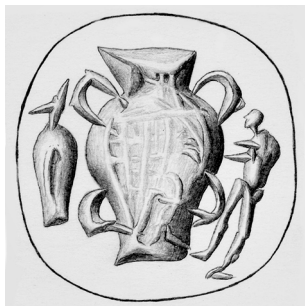
9.1 – man with tool
(II.2 102a/MM II)



9.2 – man, toothed pole
(II.2 159b/MM II)



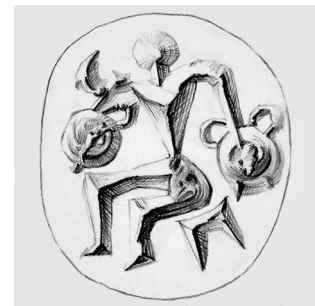
9.3 – man with vessel
(II.2 159a/MM II)



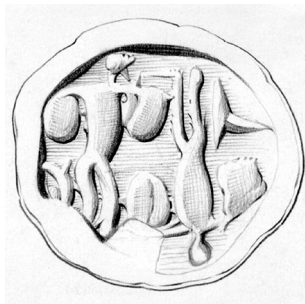
9.4 – potter, pithos
(VI 45b/MM II)



9.5 – potter, amphora
(VI 34b/MM II)



9.6 – potter, flasks
(VI 44a/MM II)



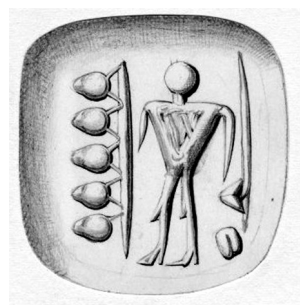
9.7 – man carrying loads
(II.1 300b/EM III-MM IA)



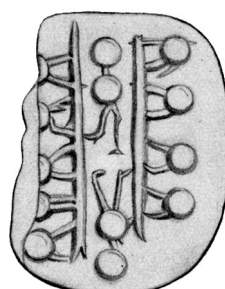
9.8 – porter
(XI 122b/MM II)



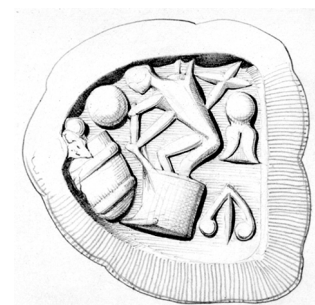
9.9 – porter
(VI 44c/MM II)



9.10 – porter, loads
(II.2 306c/MM II)



9.11 – porter, loads
(XI 298a/MM II)



9.12 – man as worker
(II.1 420b/MM II)

The Sphere of Mortals

Everyday Work – Early Seal Period (*cont.*)



9.13 – man with animal
(II.1 51/EM III-MM 1A?)



9.14 – herder
(II.2 163b/MM II)



9.15 – tending the herd
(II.8 33/MM II)



9.16 – fisherman carrying catch
(II.2 174a/MM II)



9.17 – carrying catch
(I 414c/MM II)

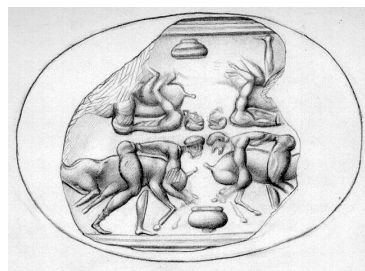


9.18 – crossed hands
(III 229c/MM II)

Everyday Work – *Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art*



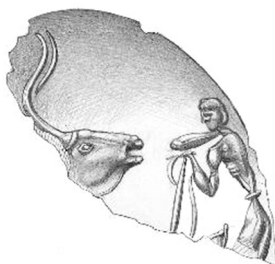
9.19 – tending the herd
(II.8 232/-)



9.20 – tending the herd
(VS 1A 137/LM I)



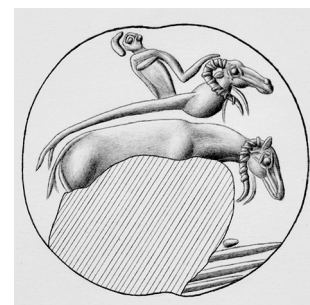
9.21 – tending the herd
(II.7 30/LM I)



9.22 – tending the herd
(II.8 233/-)



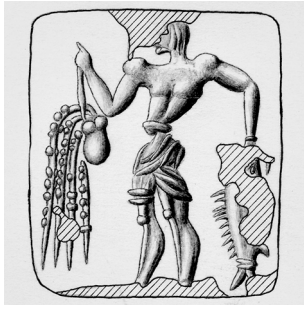
9.23 – tending the herd
(VI 329/LB I-LB II)



9.24 – tending the herd
(VI 330/LB I-LB II)

The Sphere of Mortals

Everyday Work – Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art (cont.)



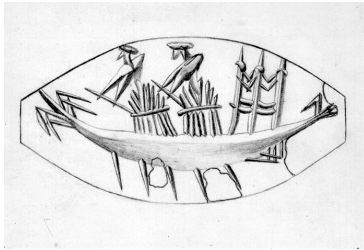
9.25 – carrying the catch
(VI 183/MM III-LM I)



9.26 – fisherman
(VII 88/LM I)



9.27 – carrying the catch
(X 144/LB I-LB II)



9.28 – aboard ship
(II.8 167/LM I)



9.29 – man at work
(II.8 263/LM I-LM II?)



9.30 – workers at a tripod
(II.8 275/LB)

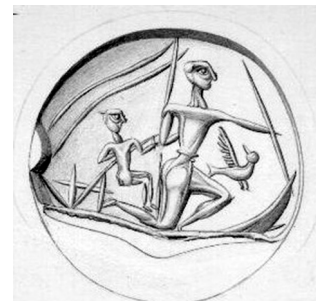
Everyday Work – Legacy and Late Periods



9.31 – herder, ram
(II.8 386/LM II-LM IIIA1)



9.32 – herder, cow, calf
(VI 327/LB II-LB IIIA1)



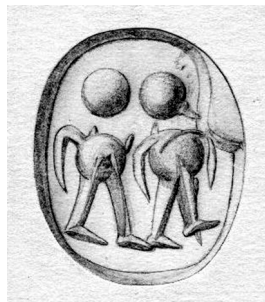
9.33 – sailor
(V 184b/LB II-LB IIIA1)

Processions, Worship and Ceremony

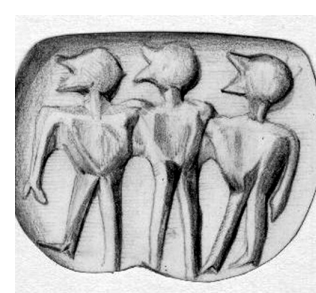
Processions, Worship and Ceremony – Early Seal Period



9.34 – man full figure
(II.1 145a/MM II)



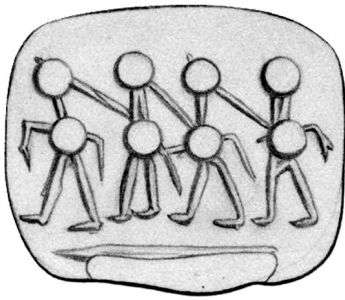
9.35 – human pair
(II.2 160b/MM II)



9.36 – processing
(II.2 2a/MM II)

The Sphere of Mortals

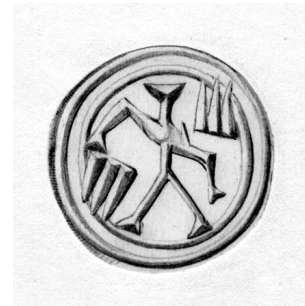
Processions, Worship and Ceremony – *Early Seal Period (cont.)*



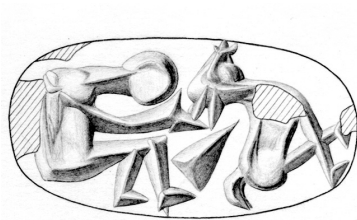
9.37 – procession
(XI 298c/MM II)



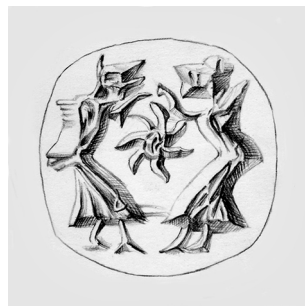
9.38 – musicians
(II.6 150/EM III-MM IA)



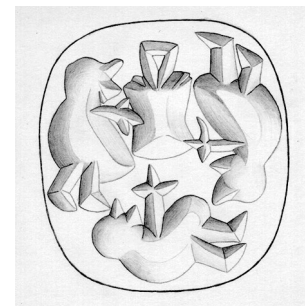
9.39 – man with syrinx
(II.2 204a/EM III-MM IA)



9.40 – server, sacrifice
(III 213c/MM II)



9.41 – women gesturers
(VI 34a/MM II)



9.42 – men, cloak
(VS 1A 43c/MM II)

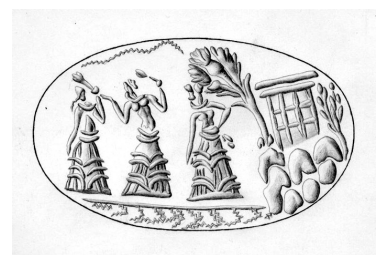
Processions, Worship and Ceremony – *Minoan High Art*



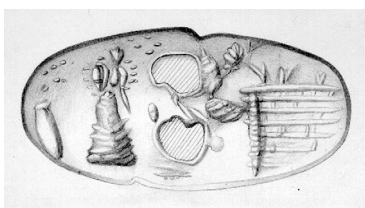
9.43 – men meeting
(II.7 18/LM I)



9.44 – pair
(II.6 10/LM I)



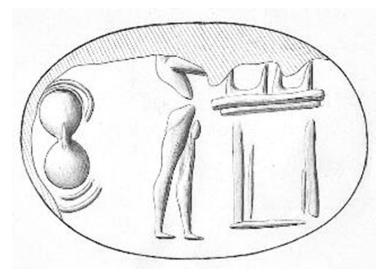
9.45 – procession
(VS 1B 114/LB I-LB II)



9.46 – serving at the shrine
(II.3 15/LM I)



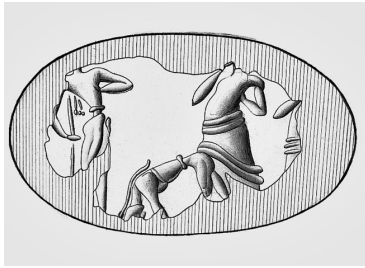
9.47 – serving at the altar
(I 410/LB I)



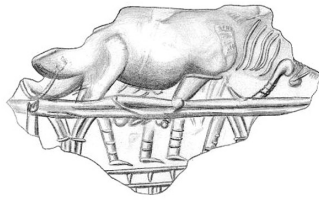
9.48 – serving at the altar
(II.8 272/LM I-LM II?)

The Sphere of Mortals

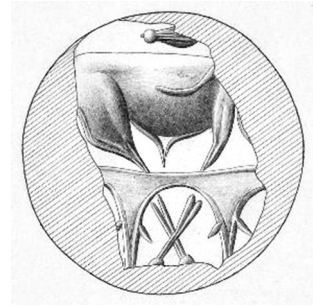
Processions, Worship and Ceremony – *Minoan High Art (cont.)*



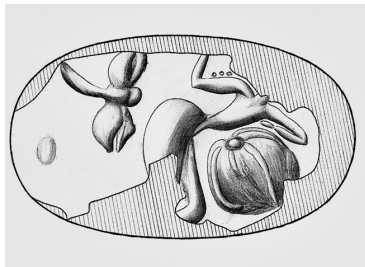
9.49 – VIP accepting homage
(II.7 3/LM I)



9.50 – sacrificing
(II.8 480/LM I-LM II)



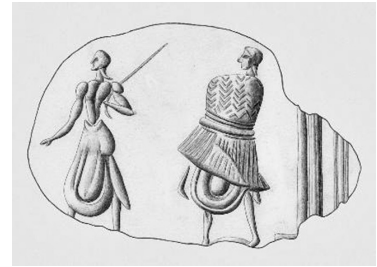
9.51 – sacrifice
(II.8 481/LM I-LM II)



9.52 – kneeling the boulder
(II.7 6/LM I)

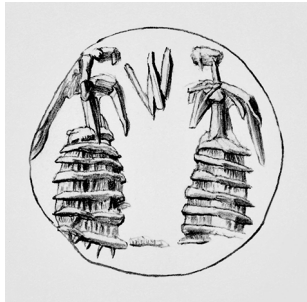


9.53 – pulling the tree
(XII 264/LM I)

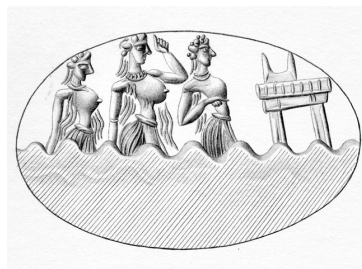


9.54 – presenting the cloak
(II.6 11/LM I)

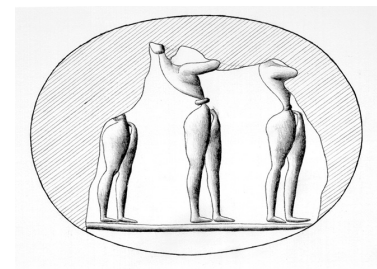
Processions, Worship and Ceremony – *Legacy and Late Periods*



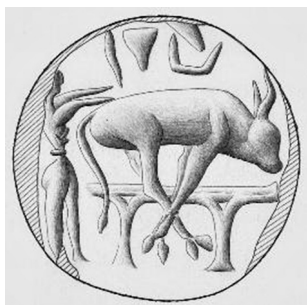
9.55 – meeting
(VI 291/LM IIIA1-LM IIIA2?)



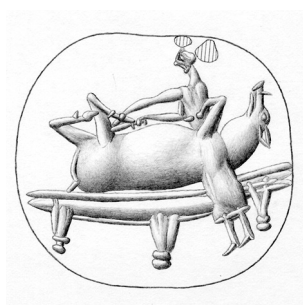
9.56 – processing
(I 108/LH II-LH IIIA1)



9.57 – processing
(I 170/LB II-LB IIIA1)



9.58 – sacrificing
(II.6 173/LM II-LM IIIA1?)



9.59 – sacrificing
(I 80/LB II-LB IIIA1)



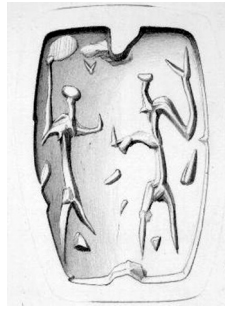
9.60 – sacrifice
(XI 52/LH II-LH IIIA1)

The Sphere of Mortals

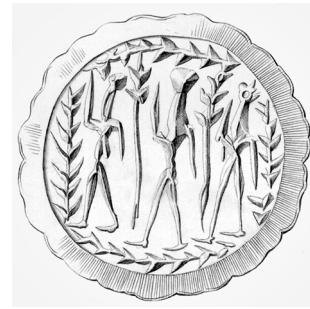
Processions, Worship and Ceremony – *Legacy and Late Periods (cont.)*



9.61 – pulling the tree
(I 126/LB II-LB IIIA1)



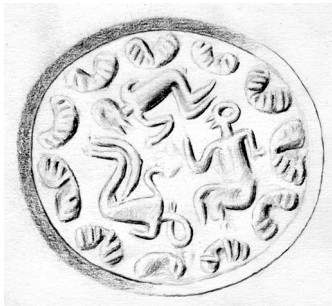
9.62 – meeting, gesturing
(V 11/LH IIIA2-LH IIIB)



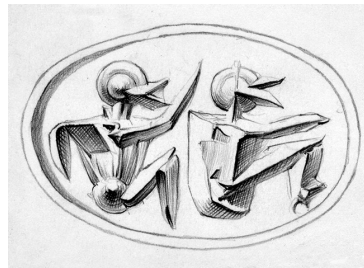
9.63 – processing, gesturing
(I 42/LH IIIA2-LH IIIB)

Mortals Gesturing

Mortals Gesturing – *Early Seal Period*



9.64 – men gesturing
(II.1 385a/EM III-MM IA)



9.65 – men gesturing
(VII 16a/MM II)



9.66 – man gesturing
(IX 14a/MM II)

Mortals Gesturing – *Minoan High Art*



9.67 – forehead gesture
(II.6 13/LM I)



9.68 – heart gesture
(VS 1A 176/LM I)



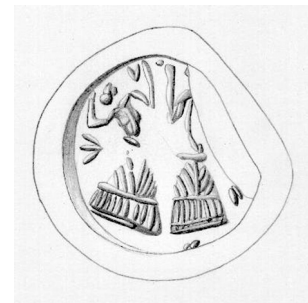
9.69 – shoulder gesture
(II.6 2/LM I)



9.70 – forehead gesture
(VI 286/LM I)



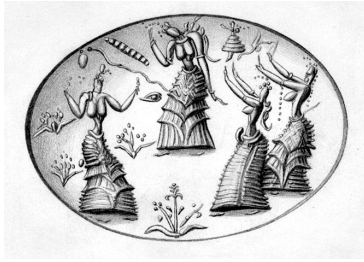
9.71 – greeting gesture
(II.6 4/LM I)



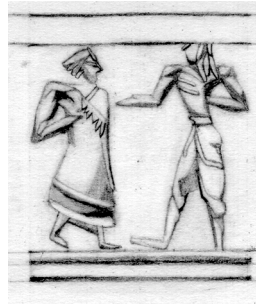
9.72 – hands high gesture
(IX 164/LM I)

The Sphere of Mortals

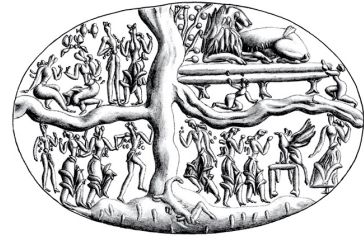
Mortals Gesturing – Minoan High Art (cont.)



9.73 – arms high gesture
(II.3 51/LM I-LM II)



9.74 – reaching gesture
(IS 113/LB I-LB II)



9.75 – holding hands gesture
(VI 277/LM I)

Mortals Gesturing – Legacy and Late Periods



9.76 – greeting gesture
(I 86/ LB II-LB IIIA1)



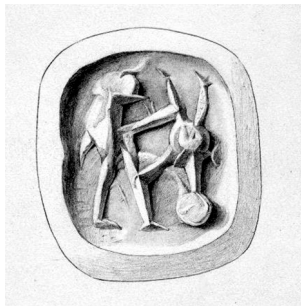
9.77 – forehead gesture
(VS 1A 75/LB II-LB IIIA1)



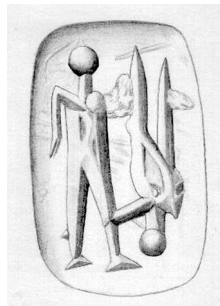
9.78 – hands high gesture
(I 127/ LB II-LB IIIA1)

Athletic Sports and Bull Sports

Athletic Sports and Bull Sports – Early Seal Period



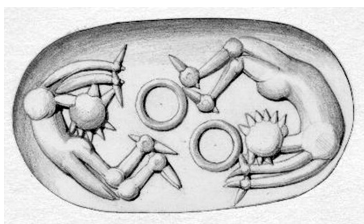
9.79 – wrestlers
(IX 2a/MM II)



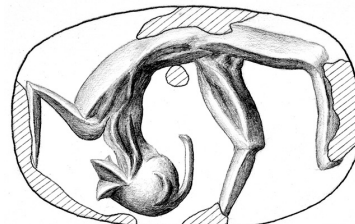
9.80 – wrestlers
(II.2 225c/MM II)



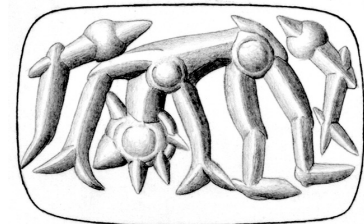
9.81 – wrestlers
(VI 46b/MM II)



9.82 – tumblers somersaulting
(II.2 230b/MM II)



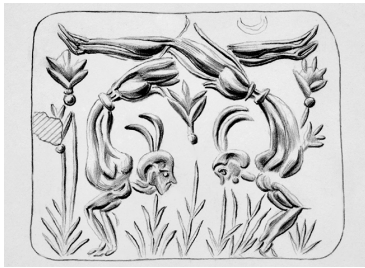
9.83 – tumbler
(III 166a/MM II)



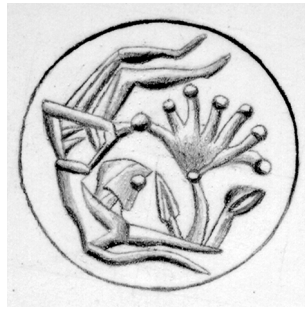
9.84 – tumbler
(III 65a/MM II)

The Sphere of Mortals

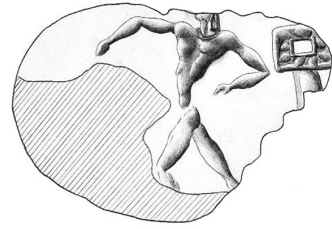
Athletic Sports and Bull Sports – *Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art*



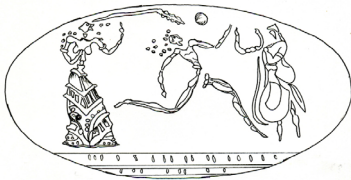
9.85 – tumblers somersaulting
(VI 184/MM III-LM I)



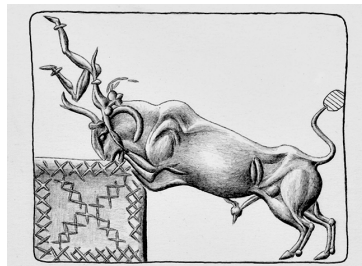
9.86 – tumbler somersaulting
(IS 169a/LB I-LB II)



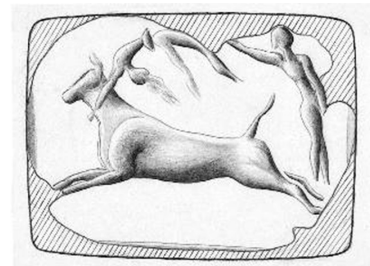
9.87 – sport wrestling
(II.8 280/LM I)



9.88 – runner
(Runner Ring/LM I)

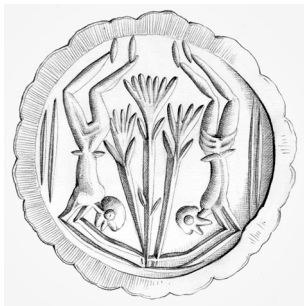


9.89 – leaper falling
(VI 181/MM III-LM I)



9.90 – leaper somersaulting, leaper landing
(II.8 221/LM I)

Athletic Sports and Bull Sports – *Legacy and Late Periods*



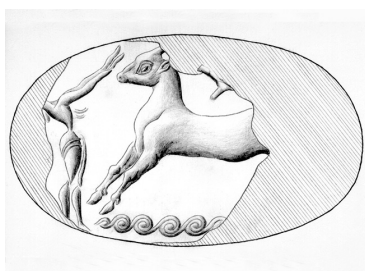
9.91 – tumbler
(I 131/LB II-LB IIIA1)



9.92 – leaper somersaulting
(III 362/LM IIIA1)



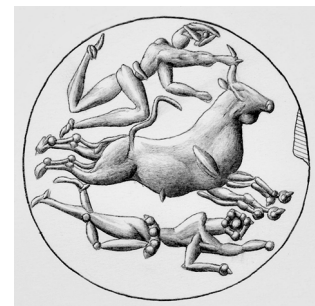
9.93 – leaper somersaulting
(VS 3 33/LM IIIA1)



9.94 – leaper preparing
(I 305/LB II-LB IIIA1)



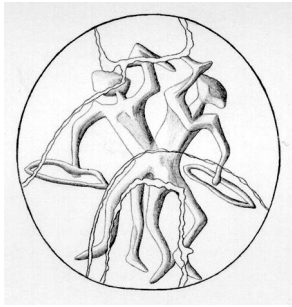
9.95 – leaper bulldogging
(II.8 229/LM II-LM IIIA1?)



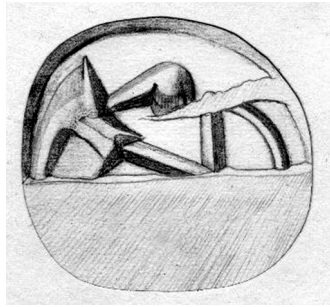
9.96 – leaper fallen, leaper somersaulting
(VI 342/LB II-LB IIIA1)

War and the Hunt

War and the Hunt – *Early Seal Period*



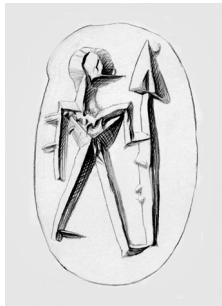
9.97 – warriors war duelling
(VS 1A 294/EM III-MM IA)



9.98 – archer
(II.2 98a/MM II)



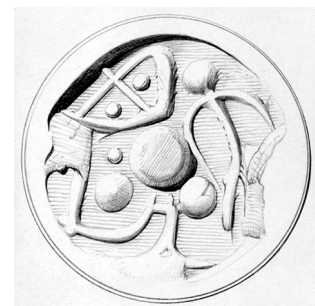
9.99 – archer
(II.2 164c/MM II)



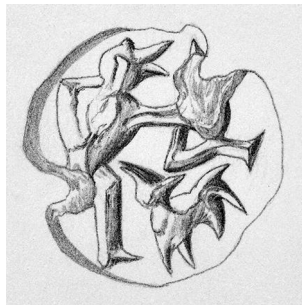
9.100 – man with weapon
(VI 68a/MM II)



9.101 – warrior with spear
(XII 68a/MM II)



9.102 – bow and arrow
(II.1 426b/MM I?)



9.103 – hunter, bow, hound
(VIII 12/MM II)



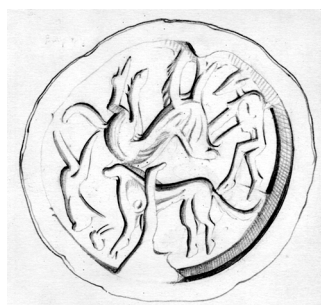
9.104 – hunter carrying the catch
(VI 25a/MM II)



9.105 – hunter dealing with the catch
(IV D12a/MM II)



9.106 – hunter fallen
(II.6 149/EM III-MM IA)



9.107 – hunter fallen
(II.1 311b/EM III-MM IA)



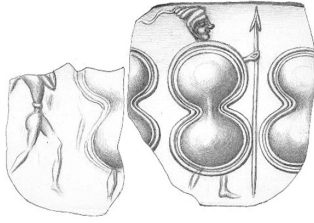
9.108 – hunter
(II.1 222a/EM III-MM IA)

The Sphere of Mortals

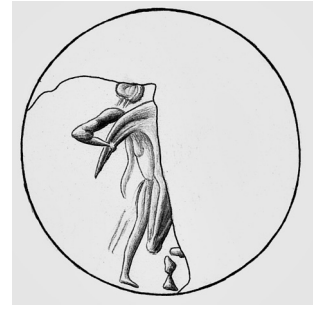
War and the Hunt – Minoan High Art



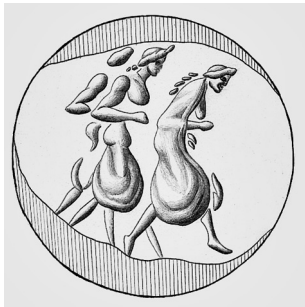
9.109 – warriors armed
(II.3 32/LM I)



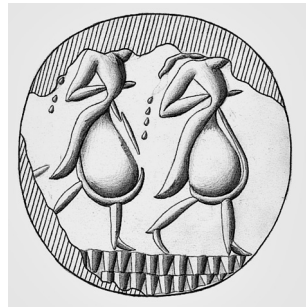
9.110 – warriors armed
(II.8 276/LM I?)



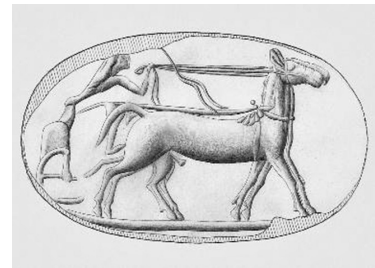
9.111 – warrior, defensive shield
(II.7 251/LM I)



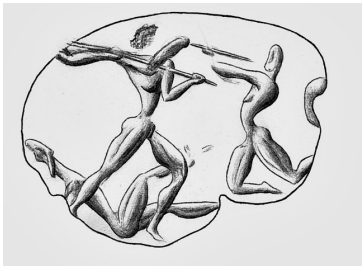
9.112 – warrior group
(II.7 15/LM I)



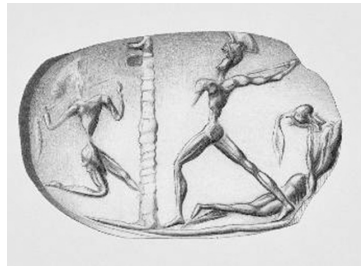
9.113 – warrior pair
(II.7 14/LM I)



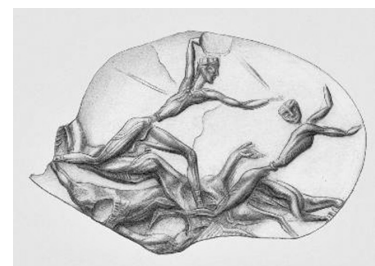
9.114 – driving the chariot
(II.6 19/LM I)



9.115 – war duelling, warrior fallen
(II.7 20/LM I)



9.116 – war duelling, warrior fallen
(II.6 17/LM I)



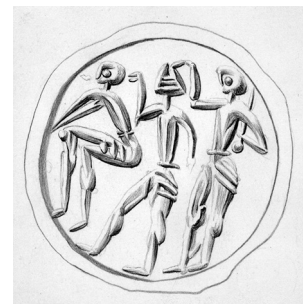
9.117 – war duelling
(II.6 15/LM I)



9.118 – war duelling
(II.6 16/LM I)



9.119 – war duelling
(VII 129/LB I-LB II)



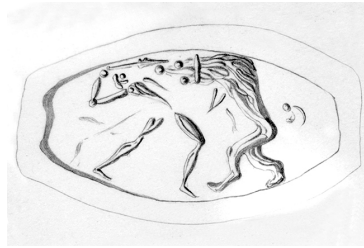
9.120 – warriors
(VII 130/LB I-LB II)

The Sphere of Mortals

War and the Hunt – Minoan High Art (*cont.*)



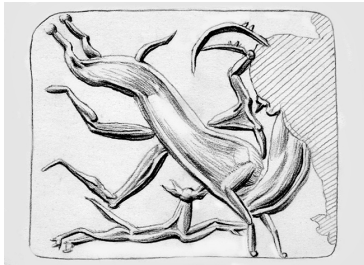
9.121 – hunt duelling
(VS 1A 135/LM I)



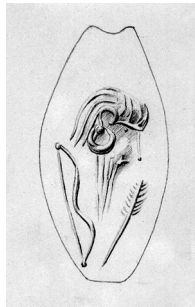
9.122 – hunt duelling
(IV 233/LM I)



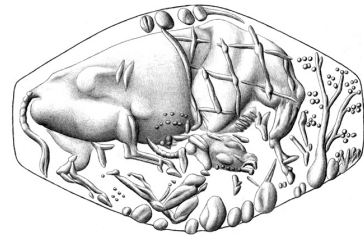
9.123 – hunt duelling
(IX 152/LB I)



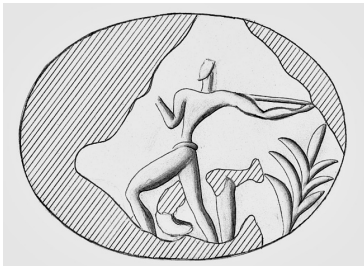
9.124 – hunt wrestling
(VI 179/MM III-LM I)



9.125 – head profile
(VIII 110b/LM I)



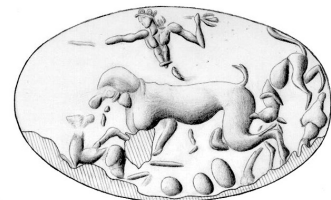
9.126 – hunter fallen
(I 274/LB I-LB II)



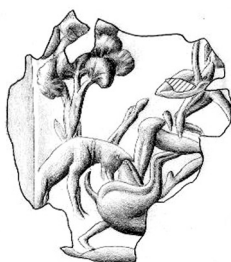
9.127 – hunter aiming
(II.7 19/LM I)



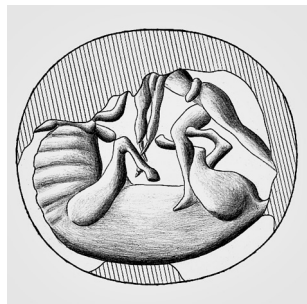
9.128 – hunter aiming
(II.6 37/LM I)



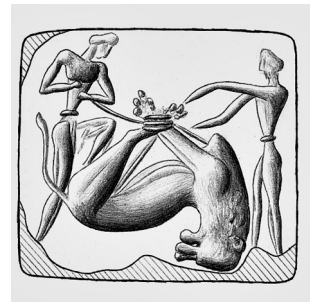
9.129 – hunter aiming
(VS 1B 341/LM I)



9.130 – dealing with the catch
(VS 3 400/LM I)



9.131 – dealing with catch
(II.7 32/LM I)



9.132 – dealing with catch
(II.7.33/LM I)

The Sphere of Mortals

War and the Hunt – *Legacy and Late Periods*



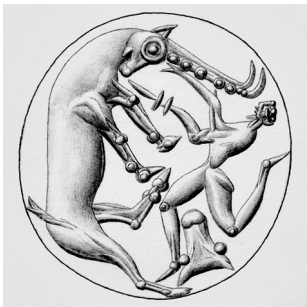
9.133 – war duelling
(XI 34/LH II-LH IIIA1)



9.134 – war duelling, warrior fallen
(IX 158/LB II-LB IIIA1)



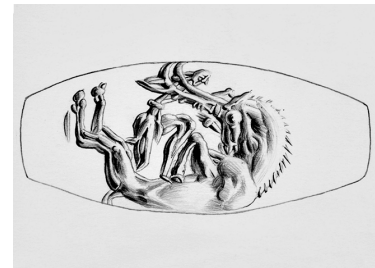
9.135 – driving the chariot
(VII 87/LB II-LB IIIA1)



9.136 – hunt duelling
(VI 344/LB IIIA1)



9.137 – carrying the catch
(II.8 238/LM IIIA1)



9.138 – dealing with the catch
(VI 345/LB II-LB IIIA1)



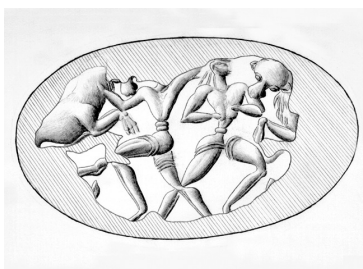
9.139 – hunter fallen
(XII 240/LB II-LB IIIA1)



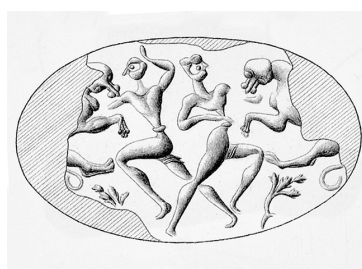
9.140 – hunt duelling
(VII 131/LB II-LB IIIA1)



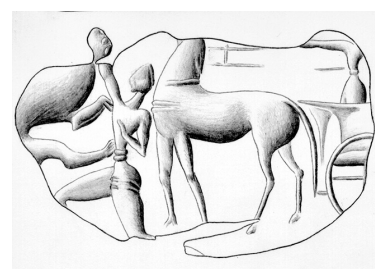
9.141 – genius hunter
(XI 39/LB II-LB IIIA1)



9.142 – hunt wrestling
(I 307/LB II-LB IIIA1)



9.143 – hunt wrestling
(IS 173/LB II-LB IIIA1)



9.144 – hunt scene
(I 302/LB II-LB IIIA1)

Iconographic Interpretation: Mortals Beautiful, Pious and Brave

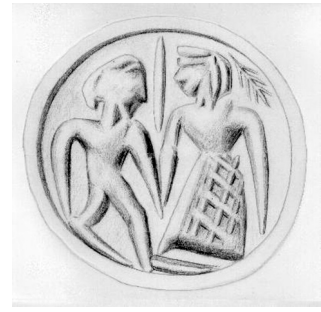
Private Lives



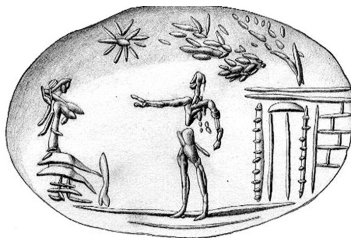
9.145 – human couple
(II.1 446a/EM III-MM IA)



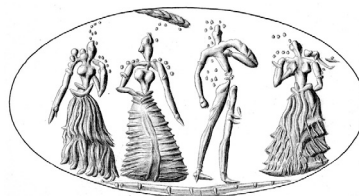
9.146 – human couple
(VI 23/MM II)



9.147 – human couple
(II.5 324/MM II)



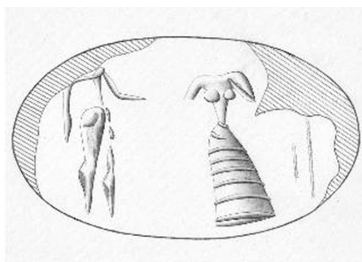
9.148 – couple gesturing
(XI 28/LM I)



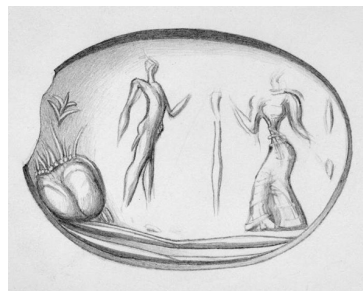
9.149 – couple gesturing
(VS 3 68/LM I)



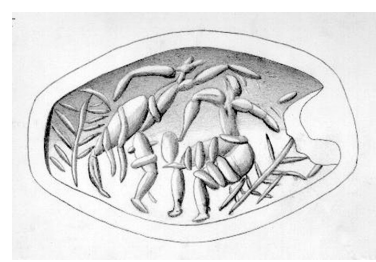
9.150 – couple gesturing
(XI 29/LM I)



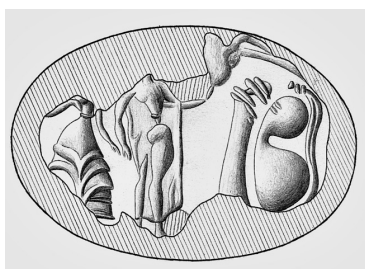
9.151 – couple gesturing
(II.8 269/LB)



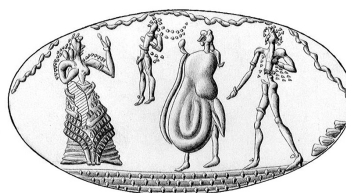
9.152 – couple gesturing
(VS 1A 180/LM I)



9.153 – couple gesturing
(IX 115/LB I)



9.154 – couple holding hands
(II.7 5/LM I)

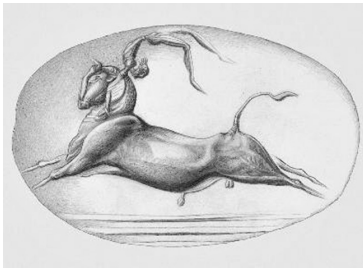


9.155 – woman, warrior, man
(VS 2 106/LM I)

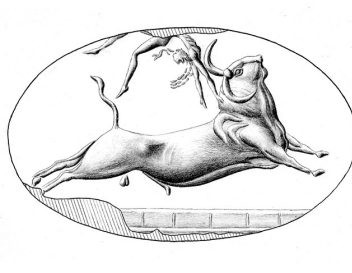


9.156 – couple holding hands
(VI 280/LM I)

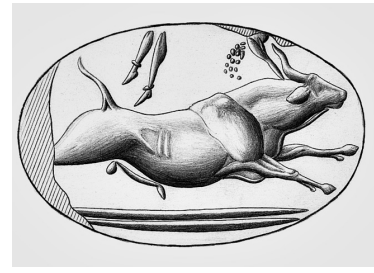
The Ceremony of Leaping the Bull



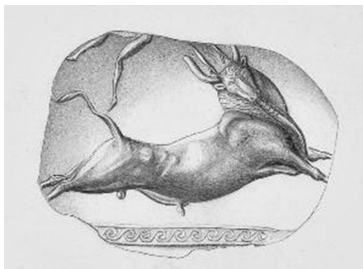
9.157 – leaper somersaulting
(II.6 44/LM I)



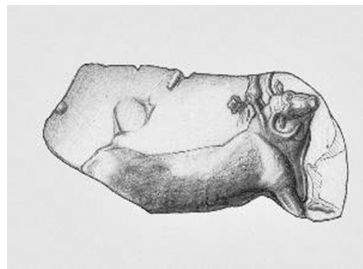
9.158 – leaper somersaulting
(VS 3 392/LM I)



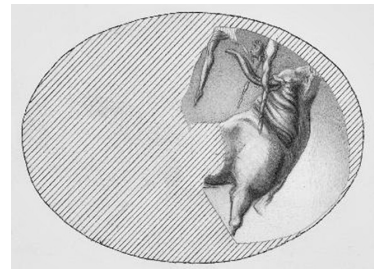
9.159 – leaper somersaulting
(II.7 37/LM I)



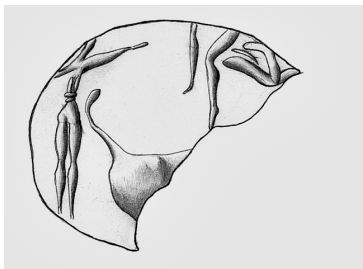
9.160 – leaper somersaulting
(II.6 256/LM I)



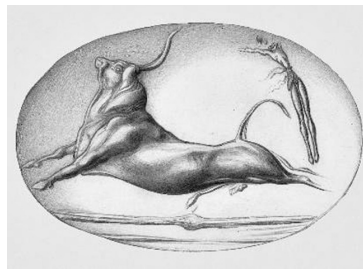
9.161 – leaper somersaulting
(II.6 42/LM I)



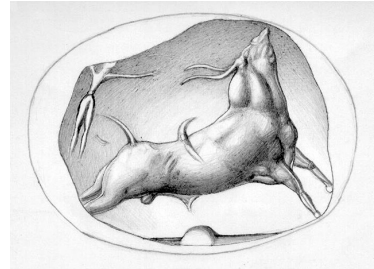
9.162 – leaper somersaulting
(II.6 257/LM I)



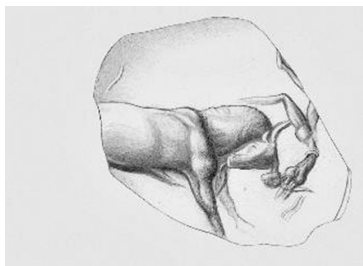
9.163 – leaper landing, leaper
somersaulting (II.7 35/LM I)



9.164 – leaper landing
(II.6 43/LM I)



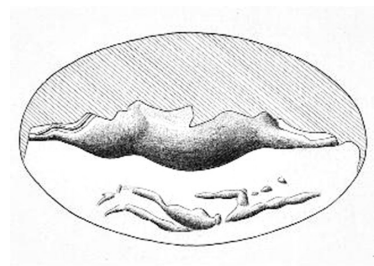
9.165 – leaper landing
(VS 1A 171/LM I)



9.166 – leaper falling
(II.6 39/LM I)



9.167 – leaper falling
(II.6 40/LM I)



9.168 – leaper fallen
(II.8 227/-)

Chapter 10 Exotic Animals and Fantastic Creatures

At this stage of our iconographic enquiry we turn, in Chapters 10 to 12, from the observable world around and the daily occupations of Minoans and Mycenaeans to enter the world of the exotic, the fantastic and the supernatural. This Chapter begins the journey with the exotic in the form of animals that are not indigenous to Crete – the monkey, lion and crocodile – and the fantastic in the form of creatures that have never lived anywhere except in the fertile human imagination – the griffin, sphinx, dragon and genius¹. These creatures have attracted much comment over the years but a full coverage of the seal depictions reveals just how comfortably some of them came to inhabit Aegean iconography².

Monkey, Lion and Crocodile

Monkey

African monkeys of the *Chlorocebus* genus (particularly the vervet and green monkeys) and baboons of the *Papio* genus (particularly the hamadryas baboon), were known in ancient Egypt and carefully distinguished in the art there. Either, or both, are thought to be the inspiration for monkey images in the Aegean³. When simian-like images appear in the early Minoan seal designs and as the seal shape itself⁴, such differentiation is not certain. Accordingly, the term monkey is used here for all such representations. Monkey images continue to the time of the LM IB destructions.

Monkey – *Early Seal Period* (Plates 10.1 to 10.6)

The earliest monkey images as in 10.1 and 10.2 show the animal in varied poses. In the MM II designs seated and standing poses are favoured as in 10.3 to 10.6. The long tail is always a feature. Some of the depictions already suggest human-like characteristics as in 10.5 and 10.6.

Monkey – *Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art* (Plates 10.7 to 10.18)

The monkey is known in the Experimentation Period in its animal state, sitting among rocks or playing as in 10.7 and 10.8. It is a favourite in Minoan High Art. Its animal persona is seen in 10.9 where it is

1 Search the IconAegean Database in the Element field for monkey, lion, crocodile, griffin, sphinx, dragon and genius. Search on sejant, couchant, statant, averted, gardant, regardant, elevated and displayed in the Syntax field. Search the IconADict Database for the definition of each term or refer to IAS.

2 A shorter presentation of the significance of these exotic and fantastic creatures is included in the ZOIA Conference papers as “The Fabulous Five: monkey, lion, griffin, dragon, genius”, ZOIA, 199-213. It draws on the earlier work in Crowley, AE. Although I am concentrating on the seal images here, I draw on the extensive discussions on animalia in the Aegean by Andrew Shapland and Fritz Blakolmer which cover all media. Both essays provide extensive documentation and statistical evidence: A. Shapland 2009, *Over the Horizon: Human-Animal Relations in Bronze Age Crete* and F. Blakolmer 2016d, 97-183, “Il Buono, il Brutto, il Cattivo? Character, Symbolism and Hierarchy of Animals and Supernatural Creatures in Minoan and Mycenaean Iconography”. In making my own assessment of the significant seal evidence I do not think I have trespassed their insights.

3 With reference to the Late Minoan frescoes, a new source has been argued: the Hanuman langur from the Indian sub-continent, *Semnopithecus*, with Mesopotamia as an intermediary, in M. Pareja et al. 2020, 159-168.

4 For comments on the figural seals in monkey shape see Aruz, CMS B7, 57-58.

sitting quietly on rocky ground but increasingly it is shown interacting with human figures. The monkey helps a woman pick crocuses in 10.10 and, in a possible linked image, is shown as sole subject in the midst of crocus flowers⁵ in 10.11. This helper role is overlaid with the role of server in 10.15, which is composed in the VIP granting audience *Icon*, where a monkey and a woman both stand before a female VIP giving her the hands high gesture. In 10.12 a monkey is shown with a tie around the waist and tethered to a VIP Lord in the midst of a flower field. The monkey may be seen here as both helper, linking it with the crocus gathering in 10.10, and server, linking it with the hands high gesture in 10.15. The close relationship with human figures is highlighted by the tie around the waist which is also seen in 10.16 and 10.18. In 10.16 the monkey again gives the hands high gesture to a VIP although the identity of the figure is not clear. The images in 10.17 and 10.18 appear to take the monkey roles to a new level. In 10.17 it looks at first as if the monkey is a server giving the hands high gesture to a female figure who gives the greeting gesture in return. However, the female figure carries none of the extra features which may declare her a deity and the monkey is of enormous size in relation to her. Both these aspects suggest that it is the monkey that is the VIP. In 10.18 the case is even clearer. The monkey is seated on a stool with a human approaching – a classic VIP granting audience *Icon* which usually has the Great Lady seated on one of her identifying seats greeting a woman who approaches gesturing. Moreover, the monkey has a footstool and a papyrus flower plant arching over, details which raise its status further. In 10.13 and 10.14 the antithetical group composition shows the monkey in the role of attendant to special objects like the vase and the curved altar, proclaiming a symbolic role.

Lion

The lion, *Panthera leo*, was known from Egypt, the Asiatic lands and Balkans in ancient times, as Nancy Thomas has so thoroughly documented⁶. It is a regular subject in both the Egyptian and Mesopotamian artistic traditions. Although absent as an animal from Crete, it is an early starter in Minoan seals, both as an image and as the seal shape itself⁷. Its presence in mainland Greece in the Bronze Age provides lived experience for Mycenaeans at home and for Minoans visiting. Lions are one of the favourite subjects in all periods through to the end of our survey.

Lion – Early Seal Period (Plates 10.19 to 10.27)

In the earliest seals as in 10.19 to 10.22 the lion's body is substantial and its long tail is regularly curled at the end. The main feature is the mane, handled as a distinct pattern, with crosshatching or a leaf design being the most used at this time. Lions are regularly posed statant. The animal file as in 10.21 uses the seal perimeter as a groundline where they are described as parading lions. In 10.22 we have possibly the earliest representation of the Lion Lady. By MM II, the lion has become rather more feline in body. It is shown living an animal life, posed within a landscape as in 10.23 and leaping out from a rocky hide through a reed-filled landscape as in 10.24. The lion is now important enough to be given sole subject status. In 10.25 and 10.27 it is more formally presented in the heraldic pose sejant while in 10.27 it turns its head to the triple bud symbol. The lion head in 10.26 continues the motif of animal heads known from early times with the indigenous fauna.

Lion – Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art (Plates 10.20 to 10.42)

The lion is a favourite in Minoan High Art. It continues to have a feline shape, the shaggy mane is a feature and the tail is thickened at the end even to being a knob. It now has several roles. In its animal life it can be shown coursing through a landscape in the flying gallop which accentuates its power and

⁵ Not all scholars accept that the florets are crocus.

⁶ See Thomas *PHYSIS*, 375-389, and more recently, *ZOIA*, 63-81.

⁷ For comments on figural seals in lion shape see Aruz, *CMS B7*, 58-59.

speed as in 10.28. In echoes of earlier patterning the same lion flying leaps create a dreipass spiral design in 10.29 while four frontal lion heads split the circle in a four division in 10.30. Sometimes the male lion, complete with shaggy mane, is also endowed with female dugs as seen in 10.31 and there are even suckling scenes. In its animal life the lion can be both the great predator and the vanquished quarry. The action-filled animal attack scenes show it overwhelming its prey, especially in the classic *Icons* of crunching and seizing. In other scenes it leaps at a young deer as in 10.32 or it feasts on the carcass of a quadruped that has already fallen victim to its ferocious onslaught as in 10.33. It can fall victim to the other great predator, the griffin, as in 10.73 and 10.74 but occasionally can win as in 10.76. Yet, the great lion predator is always vanquished when it meets the human hunter in hunt duelling scenes as in 10.34, even to its carcass being tied up as the victorious hunters deal with their catch in 10.35. It should be noted that the hunt images show that the lion is not easily subdued. In 10.34 a lion of immense size rears up and claws the hunter trying to dispatch it with his sword. Even though the hunter will win the contest he will be left with grievous wounds. At times the hunted lion is the sole subject of the seal design as in 10.36 where the arrow in its side is the only indication of the human aggressor. The study here is of the agony of the great beast as, in its distress, it contorts its body, scratching at the lethal missile. Turning to more formal representations of lions we see in the antithetical group compositions of 10.37 and 10.38 that lions may guard a gate shrine or a grand pillar. In 8.79 the antithetical group shows lions guarding a curved altar. In 10.39 the lion as sole subject poses statant regardant. In 10.124 the lion poses couchant on a sacrifice altar. The couchant pose is regularly used for live lions but the placing of a couchant live lion on a sacrifice altar is a one only depiction. In 10.40 to 10.42 the lion interacts with VIPs. The antithetical group features lions as attendants in Mistress of Animals and Master of Animals images, a Lion Mistress in 10.40 and a Griffin Lion Master in 10.79. There are images composed in the VIP with familiar *Icon* where the lion identifies a Lion Lord as in 10.41 and a Lion Lady as in 10.42. In both cases weapons – the sword wielded by the Lord and the composite bow behind the Lady – are present.

Lion – Legacy Period (Plates 10.43 to 10.57)

Animal attack scenes show the violent *Icons* of crunching and seizing as in 10.43 and 10.44. Suckling scenes are also depicted where the male lion, complete with shaggy mane, also has female dugs as in 10.45. Hunt duelling scenes remain favourites as in 10.46 to 10.48. The lions are always huge and ferocious, continuing to inflict wounds. The warriors are ever brave, thrusting their swords into the beasts, and even braver when wrestling them with bare hands as in 10.48. Heraldic poses and antithetical group compositions present lions in symbolic roles. The lion is statant before a grand pillar in 10.49 while lions as attendants pose sejant averted regardant about an orb rod in 10.50 and rampant regardant about an altar with a sunburst above in 10.51. The Master of Animals *Icon* presents the Lion Master wrestling lions with his bare hands as in 10.52 and controlling them by using a leash as in 10.53. The Lion Master in 10.54 is shown in the pose of a Mighty Lord. In 10.55 the Mistress of Animals is a Lion Mistress wearing a horn bow hat. The VIP with familiar *Icon* presents the Lion Lord in 10.56 and 10.57 and in both cases the lion is held by its collar. New motifs, the lionman and lionwoman hybrid humans, appear as in 11.21 and 11.36 to 11.40.

Crocodile

The crocodile, *Crocodylus niloticus*, a denizen of Egypt and the Nile, is featured in the art there. This reptile is likely to be the inspiration for a sinuous creature which appears early in Minoan seal designs as sole subject. The Aegean crocodile has short legs extending from a long curved body that is segmented or spiked. The head usually ends in a pointed snout. The crocodile motif does not make substantial inroads into the seal repertoire and there are no clear images later than Minoan High Art⁸.

8 Curved shapes in V 332 and VI 478 may echo crocodile forms.

Crocodile – *Early Seal Period* (Plates 10.58 to 10.63)

The crocodile is shown in various forms in MM II as in 10.58 to 10.61. The crocodile in 10.61 is closest to the natural shape⁹. One variation shows the creature with the head and forepart section repeated in reverse to form a two-headed beast as in 10.60. It is clear from all these details that a snake is not being represented. Indeed, the snake is not an image belonging to the seal repertoire¹⁰. It is also clear that the Minoan images somewhat misunderstand the true crocodile shape whereas they are more faithful to the natural shape of the monkey and the lion.

Crocodile – *Minoan High Art* (Plates 10.61 to 10.63)

Again, there are not many instances of the crocodile although they continue the low-to-the-ground spikey creature of earlier times as in 11.62 and 11.63. Its participation in the animal attack scene of 10.62 as prey of the griffin appears to be a one only example.

Griffin and Sphinx

The Aegean griffin is a fantastic creature having the body of a lion and the head and wings of a bird of prey. The Aegean sphinx is a fantastic creature with the body of a lion, the wings of a bird of prey and a human head. Such lion-bird hybrids exist in both the Mesopotamian and Egyptian traditions. In Egypt the sphinx and the griffin are representations of Pharaoh, and thus male, with the sphinx head having the visage of Pharaoh. The wings are not opened out but are shown folded along the lion body, with the lion shape remaining the artistic outline. In the Mesopotamian tradition early creatures share a mix of eagle and lion features. There is the powerful storm bird, Imdugud, with the head of a lion and eagle wings and talons. There is also the dragon, Mushussu, with a lion body, the wings and talons of an eagle, the scales of a snake and small horns. In the artistic rendition of these fantastic creatures the wings are raised and spread and play a great role¹¹. In the Aegean the griffin is depicted from earliest times through to the end of our seal survey while the sphinx is rarely shown until a belated interest registers images in the Legacy Period.

Griffin

Griffin – *Early Seal Period* (Plates 10.64 to 10.69)

In Minoan seal designs the griffin is also seen early but has often been mislabelled a lion. However, careful observation of the carved detail on these early seals, particularly the ivories, distinguishes between the two as in 10.64 and 10.65 and when seen in the original as in 13.30. Griffin heads show a pointed face as for an eagle's beak whereas lion faces are flat. Griffin wings are handled as a "hump" rising from the back with crosshatched or diagonal patterning whereas the lion has its mane in a line with the backbone and its patterning coming round the neck. The representation of early griffins becomes more regularised in MM II as in 10.66 to 10.69. The wings are usually shown elevated and a crest is given distinct detail. For the most part, the lion body and tail are clear but there is still some doubt as to how to handle the legs – with lion paws or bird talons. The griffin's twisted pose in 10.66 makes it difficult to read but it does have a long plume as crest and seemingly eagle talons. The griffins in 10.67 to 10.69 show the variations of a curled or three-pronged crest, separated feathers in the elevated wings and some limbs ending in talons.

⁹ It is of note that this is the design on a figural seal in the form of a lion foot.

¹⁰ See the comments on doubtful "snake" depictions and on the absence of snakes in Minoan iconography in Chapter 4 above.

¹¹ For images see AE, Plates 9, 12, 109 and for discussion on the transferences see AE, 40-53.

Griffin – Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art (Plates 10.70 to 10.84)

The griffin is now such a popular motif that the images range from the detailed to the rather sketchy. The best griffin depictions show to advantage the lithe leonine body, the spread wings with tapering curls along the wing bone and the varied crests as in 10.70 to 10.75. When the griffin is acting as a living animal it is usually posed statant as in 10.71, couchant as in 10.70 and 10.72 or in a flying gallop when in motion as in 10.73 and 10.74. The wings are mostly shown elevated where both are raised in a line with the body so that only the wing closest to the viewer is shown fully. A new wing pose, displayed, is seen in 10.72 where the griffin twists its upper body to show the breast frontal, thus allowing the wings to be fanned out on either side and fully shown. It is a spectacular artistic use of the wings and gives the creature quite a different outline. Sometimes the griffin is represented as female with dugs as in 10.71 and also in 10.72 where there are two juveniles shown as small griffins. Their shape is more like birds since the hindquarters are not developed. Placing the juveniles to the side avoids the issue of having an eagle head suckling at the dug on a lion body. To wonder whether griffin young emerge through a mammalian birth or from an egg is an even further stretch. At least the lion only had the pairing of male mane and female dugs to confuse the situation, leaving the birthing and suckling to be considered a relatively simple mammalian matter! Animal attack scenes are a favourite where the griffin is the great predator as in the chasing and crunching *Icons* of 10.73 and 10.74 which show its massive speed and power, and in the carrying the catch *Icon* of 10.75 where its complete success as a hunter is fully revealed. Its prey can be lions or stags. In a hunt reversal, a lion crunches a griffin in 10.76. The griffin may also act in symbolic roles. The antithetical group syntax in 10.77 organises an animals at the tree of life *Icon* where griffins rear up as attendants at a tree shaped like a large papyrus plant. In 10.78 a griffin stands statant facing a palm tree in a sole subject composition. The antithetical group syntax organises the Master of Animals image in 10.79 where a griffin and a lion are the attendants of a Griffin Lion Master, and the Mistress of Animals image in 10.80 where griffins are the attendants to a Griffin Mistress. In the VIP with familiar *Icon* in 10.82 a Griffin Lord holds his familiar by an ornamental leash which forms the griffin's collar. In 10.81 a Griffin Lord holds in his arms a young griffin, judging by its bird-like shape and undeveloped lion limbs. Another Griffin Lord is seen in 10.122 where he carries his familiar over his shoulder. This is not a hunting scene. The griffin is not dead and slumping down with wings crumpled. On the contrary, its body is stretched forward, its head is projected and its wings are firmly raised. Being so alert and alive, it can only be the identifying familiar of the Griffin Lord. In 10.124 a griffin sejant elevated is posed on a table altar. The griffin grand boat of 10.83 carries a VIP. It has a triple bud prow while the stern is shaped like a griffin complete with wings folded close and a feathery crest. As a parallel to the chariot scenes where a man drives a horse-drawn chariot, in 10.84 the Griffin Lord is carried along by his pair of griffins whose strength and speed are again portrayed by the flying gallop and the elevated wings.

Griffin – Legacy Period (Plates 10.85 to 10.96)

The griffin maintains a powerful image. It continues its predatory behaviour in the attack on a stag in 10.85, this time beneath a sunburst. The animal attack hierarchy is recorded in 10.86 where a griffin attacks a lion which is attacking a stag. In 10.87 it carries off its catch, this time a bird. Its symbolic role also continues. It poses regally couchant regardant displayed in 10.88 and couchant elevated along with lions in 10.89. Within an antithetical group composition, griffins pose rampant about a grand pillar placed on a curved altar in 10.90. The antithetical group presents the griffin as attendant to the Griffin Master as in 10.91 and to the Griffin Mistress as in 10.92. In the VIP with familiar *Icon* the griffin identifies a Griffin Lady. In 10.93 she gestures to her familiar, in 10.94 she tenderly cuddles it and in 10.95, comfortably seated, she holds it on a splendid leash which also forms its collar. In 10.96 two male VIPs take on the persona of Griffin Lords as they ride in a chariot harnessed to two griffin steeds.

Sphinx

Sphinx – *Early Seal Period and Minoan High Art* (Plates 10.97 to 10.99)

The sphinx appears in designs on Minoan seals in MM II. In 10.97 the sphinx is given long, almost Hathor-like, curling tresses while in 10.98 it shows a mixture of attributes. In the Minoan High Art Period the sphinx is little known. The wingless lion body with male head in 10.99 is one of the rare examples.

Sphinx – *Legacy Period* (Plates 10.100 to 10.105)

In the Legacy Period the sphinx enjoys greater favour. It is mostly shown posed couchant or sejant, the wing feathers are carefully articulated and in 10.102 and 10.104 the curls on the wing bone are indicated. It regularly wears the plumed hat as in 10.100 to 10.103. All depictions are symbolic. The antithetical group organises them as attendants to a tree of life in 10.100 and poses them as a one head pair couchant gardant on the perimeter groundline in 10.105. In 10.101 to 10.104 they are granted sole subject status. Note the wavy skyline at the sphinx neck in 10.101 and the sunburst beside the sphinx in 10.102.

Dragon

The Minoan dragon is a fantastic creature having a long stout body with a tail, short strong legs, a long neck and a smallish head with a snout. It is difficult to source the features. Imagination could hybridise Egyptian animals to join the heavy hippopotamus or elephant body with the long neck and small pointed head of a giraffe. Egyptian art does have long-bodied fantastic creatures as in the early Narmer Palette which shows two felines twining their elongated necks¹². In Mesopotamian art there are hybrid creatures that are called dragons (as noted above in the griffin discussion) but the closest match to the Minoan creature appears to be the primordial sea dragon, Tiamat, with her tubular scaly body, long neck and small head¹³. Yet, it is quite possible that dragon iconography is sourced much more in the Aegean imagination. New evidence from Thera on the pre-eruption climate suggests a much wetter Aegean scene¹⁴ which might have favoured the idea of a fantastic creature living in watery marsh lands. Minoan dragons are known in the early seals and their floruit ends at, or soon after, the LM IB destructions.

Dragon – *Early Seal Period* (Plates 10.106 to 10.110)

The earliest representations as in 10.106 and 10.107 show a creature sufficiently different from a lion and a griffin that it is clear another beast is intended. All the features except the long neck are there in embryo form. By MM II the shape is clearer, including the long neck, as in 10.108. The variation of the feathery tail appears in 10.109 and 10.110.

Dragon – *Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art* (Plates 10.111 to 10.124)

The dragon is now settled in appearance with the long tubular body, strong short legs and an extended neck as in 10.111 to 10.122, seen particularly clearly when the sealings are viewed in colour as in 13.26 and 13.41 and the seal in 13.31. The head ends in a long snout, sometimes rounded at the end, sometimes more beak-like. The head may have small ears and the back of the neck may show small protrusions. The skin on the body is often dappled with spots or lines which are shown upraised in the relief modelling as in 13.26. The tail, usually shown raised, may be smooth and thick or may be of the feathered sort. The dragon behaves like an animal but is always shown in calm poses, never active

¹² A motif which may have Mesopotamian links.

¹³ Another close comparison is the Akkadian alabaster mythological group from Tell Asmar, AE, Plate 132.

¹⁴ See Vlachopoulos and Zorzos, *PHYSIS*, 183-197.

in animal attacks as either predator or prey. The dragon pair at rest in 10.118 is a perfect example of registering their animal life. The dragon is often given sole subject status, posed appropriately, while the dragon head is featured in 10.113. When shown at ease in a landscape, its habitat comprises papyrus and palm plants as in 10.116 and 10.117 while a watery abode is indicated by the waveline in 10.115 and 10.117. The dragon also has a symbolic role to play. It may be surrounded by plant and sky symbols. In 10.119 it is placed within plants and branches in just the same way as the vase, ewer and double horns are set, while in 10.120 sunbursts are placed on each side¹⁵. The sturdy dragon of 10.121 provides a mount for the Lady who rides it side-saddle. This is the clearest depiction of the Dragon Lady and of the particular relationship with her familiar. In the papyrus landscape of 10.122 the Dragon Lady again rides her familiar, this time a feathery-tailed dragon, while enjoying the company of a striding Griffin Lord carrying his familiar. In 10.123 the female VIP is carried along in a grand boat with a triple bud prow and a dragon-shaped stern, a parallel to the griffin grand boat in 10.83. The complex image on the great gold signet in 10.124 has, among its many figures, a dragon, a griffin and a lion. There are several unusual iconographic features in this composition and a full discussion of this signet, the Nestor Ring, is undertaken in Chapter 13. However, the detail of the dragon at the base of the design is quite in keeping with dragon iconography in Minoan High Art.

Dragon – Legacy Period (Plates 10.125 to 10.126)

Two examples remain. A dragon head with characteristic “beak” is seen in the sealing fragment 10.125 although the date is uncertain. A lentoid seal shows a Dragon Lady mounted on her familiar in 10.126. She rides across either a waveline of arcs or rocky ground shown as marbling.

Genius

The Minoan genius is a fantastic creature of hippopotamus shape with a distinctive cape attached to its back. It is always shown with upright posture, often holding a ewer, and eventually comes to show the wasp waist of a Minoan man. The source of inspiration is the Egyptian hippopotamus goddess Thoueris¹⁶. The genius enters the iconographic repertoire a little later than the other four but is present, closely imitating its Thoueris prototype, by the end of the Early Seal Period. Thereafter, its influence grows to add new roles, finishing in strong favour under the Mycenaean ascendancy.

Genius – Early Seal Period (Plates 10.127 to 10.130)

The genius appears in seal designs in MM II and, as in 10.128 to 10.130, all the features are already present except for the Minoan male waist. The pose of holding out the ewer as if ready to pour out the contents is particularly notable. The truly hippopotamus shapes of these early geniuses reveal their ultimate origin in Egypt with the hippopotamus goddess Thoueris/Ta-urt. Indeed, we have one of the very items that helped transmit the image from Egypt to Crete in the Egyptian scarab of Dynasty 11-12 found at Platanos in Tholos B. The design on this scarab, illustrated as 10.127, shows the upright hippopotamus shape with the back appendage carrying another creature, the crocodile.

Genius – Minoan High Art (Plates 10.131 to 10.144)

The developed genius, as in 10.131 to 10.144, still has echoes of its Thoueris hippopotamus antecedents. The upright stance remains but the swelling belly is now cinched in at the waist to give a Minoan man’s silhouette and may be an indication that we should view the genius as male. The crocodile cape

¹⁵ These two examples are talismanic seals. The dragon is the only exotic/fantastic creature which is illustrated in the talismanic group. Onassoglou, CMS B2, *Drachen-Motiv* 134-138, XLIX.

¹⁶ See the pioneering study by Judith Weingarten, 1991, *The Transformation of Egyptian Tawret into Minoan Genius: A Study of Cultural Transmission in the Middle Bronze Age*. Additional evidence is given in Rehak, CMS B5, 215-231.

has become a knobbed appendage down the back which sometimes widens to look like a shell partly encompassing the body. The head at times looks more leonine. It usually has ears and sometimes there is a forehead curl. The genius, of course, never really had an animal life. The closest it ever came to looking like a living animal was to be posed with vegetation in the early days when it still had the swelling hippopotamus belly. By Minoan High Art it is fully established as a creature with specific symbolic roles. The original task as bearer of the ewer is still its main duty as seen in 10.133 to 10.137. The import of the particularly fine ewer in 10.133 is stressed by having water flows shown each side as running spirals. This ewer-bearing duty is also on view in the two antithetical group compositions of 10.136 and 10.137 composed in the *Icon* of animals at the tree of life where a genius as attendant poses each side of a vegetation symbol. In one, the central symbol is a curved altar supporting double horns from which sprout branches, while in the other the symbol is a stylised tree topped by a sunburst/rosette. The antithetical group also presents the genius in a guardian role about a grand pillar in 10.138 and as the Master of Animals with attendant lions in 10.141. A new role in 10.139 sees the genius as a victorious hunter. Just like the human hunter, he is shown bravely spearing a great bull that rears up to be a meet adversary. Note that the genius steadies itself for its forward lunge by standing on rocky ground. In 10.140 the link with hunting is further elaborated by the genius being shown helping a lion hunter, holding its arms around the hunter's sword scabbard in a clever variation of the original ewer-holding pose. In 10.132 a one only image shows a genius holding close to its chest/breast a small animal of some sort. This small creature, thought to be a lion, looks rather like a baby genius – if one could imagine a baby genius shown frontal face. The unusual details of this piece remind us that we are far from having all Minoan iconography at our finger tips. The three images 10.142 to 10.144 are more amenable to understanding since they all are created in the *Icon* of VIP with familiar. Instead of the male Lord figure holding a bull by horn or leash, the genius holds a bull¹⁷ and, in a parallel portrayal in 10.142, a cow. Instead of a Lord figure holding a lion, in 10.143 and 10.144 it is the genius. In these images the genius gains high status through substitution as the Bull Lord and the Lion Lord.

Genius – Legacy Period (Plates 10.145 to 10.156)

In the Legacy Period the genius appears to be in even more favour. Its primary role of ewer bearer is seen in 10.145 where it stands beside an orb rod. Antithetical group compositions show the genius attending a grand pillar in 10.146 and as a Master of Animals with attendant hounds in 10.152. Continuing the successful hunter role in the carrying the catch *Icon*, the genius carries a young agrimi in 10.147, a stag in 10.148, two lions in 10.149 and a great bull in 10.150. Presented in the same iconographic formula, the genius carries a dead man in 10.151. Returning to its original role as ewer bearer, the genius attends a Master of Animals in 10.153 and serves a Mighty Lord standing on double horns in 10.154 while a quartet of geniuses is seen bearing ewers to a Great Lady seated beside an orb rod in 10.156. The Mistress of Animals in 10.155 is attended by bulls while each side a server genius holds a palm frond upright¹⁸, a parallel to the palm branches behind the geniuses in 10.156. In these latter two examples the detail of serving a female VIP contravenes the previous association with men and male VIPs. A geniusman hybrid human appears briefly as in 11.35.

Iconographic Interpretation: Re-imagining for an Aegean Life

The Minoans created an impressive menagerie from exotic animals and fantastic creatures, all of which have links to the east. They stepped outside the fauna of their native Crete and welcomed these strange immigrants into their art and into their thought. All seven creatures were changed to accommodate to

17 As in CMS VI 305.

18 The sealing, shown in colour in 14.30, shows marks on these vertical motifs consistent with palm fronds. The description, “schlactmesser”, which is sometimes used, does not fit the size or shape of the iconographic detail; nor can it call upon depicted links between the genius and sacrifice altars or scenes to be so identified.

their new domicile but only five, the monkey, lion, griffin, dragon and genius, managed to create a full new life in Crete while the other two, the crocodile and the sphinx, never gained full acceptance. The acceptance or otherwise in the Mycenaean sphere is discussed in Chapter 14. Here we concentrate on the Minoan welcome.

Whenever a motif or an idea is taken over from the grand artistic traditions of the east into Crete, it always results in an idiosyncratic solution to recast the import into the Minoan idiom. It is clear that all these creatures came in at a very early stage in the development of Minoan iconography and that each then grew into a new Aegean life. Their changing shapes incorporated later modifications, some of which might have been prompted by renewed trips to the Levant and Egypt. When we begin to look into the interpretation of the images of these seven exotic animals and fantastic creatures we must first recognise how long they have been part of the Minoan iconographic repertoire. All are there in the Early Seal Period. Most are there from the very beginning of seal design, with the genius coming a little later, but all had safely arrived and had settled their characteristic iconographic details through the thousand years to the end of MM II. These details were consolidated in Minoan High Art.

Consider the kaleidoscope of possible influences from the east. The lion, giraffe, monkey, hippopotamus, crocodile, vulture and falcon are African fauna. Did Aegean travellers see this wildlife living then in Egypt, perhaps during journeys repeated each generation? Or were they amazed by the art showing lush vistas of Nile marshes and hieroglyphs carved or painted on the walls and monumental statuary? Or did the influence come back home with Minoan voyagers in the form of souvenir amulets and scarabs¹⁹ or even living souvenirs of pet monkeys and lion cubs? Think of the Asiatic wildlife like lions and eagles that Aegean traders and travellers might have seen. Were people hunting then with great eagles as they do now in Mongolia? Certainly, the lion and the eagle are deeply ensconced in the Mesopotamian artistic tradition, producing marvellous hybrids to guard palace gates and cover palace walls as at Mari where texts include inventories of Minoan luxury goods²⁰. Yet, most influence might have come from the cylinder seals, carried home to show gods with flowing streams, primordial Tiamat as a dragon, long-necked monsters and magnificent heroes struggling with lions²¹. All the eastern immigrants came bringing some reflection of their life and their artistic heritage from their former homelands. So, as we turn to the interpretation of each creature, we need to ponder how and why these Easterners came to the Aegean²². Is it enough to see their arrival and acceptance as the result of trade or travellers' tales or souvenir pieces? Perhaps there are deeper levels to this transference.

Companion Immigrants from the East

There are other immigrant motifs from the east that complement the evidence of the seven creatures just discussed, all coming over in the Early Seal Period, many at the very beginning in EM III-MM I. From the Mesopotamian sphere, influencing motifs include the Master of Animals, griffin, tree of life, rosette, and the artistic conventions of the animal file, heraldic poses and antithetical group. From the Egyptian sphere, influencing motifs include the palm, palmette and papyrus²³ and the particular shape of the bee. The Egyptian link seems to be particularly strong. In the early floral and foliate seal designs the palmette and palmette patterns are regular inclusions, as is the papyrus flower. Even if one allows that a native Cretan palm and an endemic tufted flower might have been part of the inspiration for these motifs, it is difficult to deny an inspirational role for the eastern date palm and the papyrus thickets of the Nile

19 For a survey of imported Egyptian items see Phillips 2008.

20 See Foster 2018, 343-362.

21 For near eastern cylinder seals with rich iconographic content see CMS II.2 29, V 657, VS 1B 332.

22 See the overview of interconnections, AE, and also the historical overview of the early communications, Aruz CMS B7, 8-48.

23 Refer to individual motifs discussed in AE and illustrated in Plates 4, 5, 31-34, 61-63, 93, 109-112, 113, 132, 149-154, 173, 185-187, 209-214, 421.

marshes. By the Minoan High Art Period the palm tree has become a symbol in its own right and papyrus flower plants signify a special landscape where deities and dragons play. This is the supernatural garden, the Papyrus Garden, as identified in Chapter 5. At this same early time, the composition and shape of some seals point to an Egyptian source. Hippopotamus ivory²⁴ is a favoured material for carving these fine pieces. In many cases parts of the original tooth²⁵ actually form the seal shape. A horizontal cross-section yields a seal with two circular faces, one slightly smaller than the other while the top of the tusk makes a dome-shaped seal with one face²⁶. Then there are the figural seals carved in the shape of monkeys and lions²⁷. The effort required to access the hippopotamus tusk raw material and its use to create a prestige item both indicate that the link to Egypt was important.

Yet, in spite of all this evidence of interconnections with the east, two of the seven exotic/fantastic creatures, the crocodile and the sphinx, did not make the transition as successfully as the other five. The crocodile and the sphinx remained as isolated images, never developing a true Minoan character and failing to integrate fully into the Minoan iconographic repertoire. Probing the reasons for this level of limited acceptance reveals different dynamics. The crocodile is an amazing reptile but it would be hard for Bronze Age Aegeans to imagine such a huge carnivorous aquatic beast if one did not have access to the swamps of the Nile. Travellers' tales do not provide reliable artistic detail and one could hardly bring a crocodile home for display and record. Seeing it attached to the back of the Thoueris/genius was hardly a substitute for direct experience. It is significant that the two exotic animals that did transfer successfully, the monkey and the lion, could have been seen by Minoans abroad, while green monkeys and lion cubs might even have been brought back as pets. For the sphinx, its limited appeal appears to be linked more to its meaning in its home artistic tradition. The sphinx shares the same lion body imagery as the lion and griffin which become great favourites. So, the reason for its rare appearance lies elsewhere than in the animal characteristics. In Egyptian art the sphinx is male, a representation of Pharaoh, and the head is his likeness. Thus, it is the grand image of monarchical power and authority. Was this understood by the Minoans and thus had no meaning for them as a people? The few Minoan examples seem more female, perhaps suggesting a transfer route via the Syrian coast and an even further distancing from the original Egyptian symbolism.

Each an Individual: Character and Roles

The **monkey** behaves both as an animal and as a creature with symbolic duties. Its playful animal persona obviously delights the Minoans but they also formally present it as the guardian of cultic objects like the vase and the curved altar. They are aware that it has many human characteristics which can make it both an *alter ego* for a human worshipper and a chameleon creature that can move as intermediary into the world of the anthropomorphic gods as discussed in Chapter 12. The monkey is a server to the Seated Lady in 10.15 and to a Lord in 10.12. Yet in 10.17 it is the monkey that is being worshipped by a woman. In the case of 10.18 the deification is even clearer. It is clearly a VIP granting audience *Icon* but iconographic substitution places the monkey in the expected position of the Great Lady receiving the server. Moreover, the monkey has a footstool and a papyrus flower plant arching over, details which raise its status further. It is hard to escape the conclusion that, at times, the monkey can take the place of the goddess herself. We should thus see the monkey as a semi-divine able to move between this world of humans and the supernatural world of the gods. In summary, the monkey, which has been with us

24 For discussion of the materials see the work of Olga Krzyszkowska on bone, ivory and boar tusk, CMS B3, 111-126 and on ivory and related materials, Krzyszkowska 1990.

25 This aggressive dangerous animal has two tusks in each jaw; the larger lower ones may grow to about 60cm.

26 Hippopotamus tusk seals, section CMS II.1 252, 260, 382, 497 and dome-shaped II.1 58, 228, 231, 241, 387.

27 For the hippopotamus ivory monkey-shaped seals see CMS II.1 249, 435, III 2 and for a hippopotamus ivory seal fashioned as a lion mauling a man see CMS II.1 130. There is also a reclining lion in carnelian, CMS III 19, and one in paste, a white piece, CMS IV D7. The hard stone figural seal, CMS IV D32, is in the shape of the foot of a lion and its seal design is quite a convincing rendition of a crocodile as shown in 10.61.

since the beginning and which has developed symbolic and even deified roles, disappears at the time of the Mycenaean ascendancy. Was it too closely identified with Minoan ritual and with the Great Lady?

The **lion** is one of the most frequently depicted animals, there from the beginning and popular to the end. In its animal life it is a worthy sole subject, posed calmly statant or sejant or exploding in flying gallops as in 10.28 and 10.29. It shares in suckling scenes and in animal attacks as in 10.31 to 10.33. It gradually morphs into being the great predator of other animals and into being the meet adversary of the human hunter for whom it becomes the test of ultimate bravery in the hunt as in 10.34. The symbolic life of the lion is of equal importance to its dynamic animal life. In guardian roles it is the attendant of grand pillars and curved altars as in 10.38 and 8.79. In 10.40 to 10.42 and 10.79 it identifies Mistresses and Masters and deities like the Lion Lady and the Lion Lord.

The **griffin** arrives very early in the iconographic repertoire, with the characteristic details of crest and wing established somewhat later, but the source of its inspiration is not very clear. In the Aegean, the wings are fully exploited artistically, their elevated and displayed poses giving a different shape from the Egyptian griffin and one more aligned to the fantastic winged creatures of the Mesopotamian repertoire. It is a notable detail that some early Minoan griffins appear to have talons. Yet it may be, after all, the bird raptors that inspire artists to combine air-borne ferocity with leonine menace. The Aegean, too, has eagles²⁸ and observation of local hunting raptors might have inspired the displayed wing pose with the couchant beast which appears to be an Aegean creation. The griffin, while not quite as frequently depicted as the lion, can almost be seen as its *alter ego*. It has similar experiences of animal life. It is a magnificent predator and a symbol of the power of the gods. In animal attack scenes as in 10.73 to 10.76 the griffin overpowers the animals of this world, agrimi, stag and bull, and carries them off, although it once suffers a crunching by a lion. In symbolic presentations the griffin guards trees of life and palms as in 10.77 and 10.78. It consorts with VIP deities. It is the attendant of the Griffin Mistress and the Griffin Master as in 10.79 and 10.80. It is the identifying familiar of the Griffin Lady and the Griffin Lord as in 10.81 and 10.82. When needing to travel, as in 10.81 and 10.82, she is carried along by a griffin grand boat while he drives a chariot drawn by his pair of griffins whose strength and speed are portrayed by the flying gallop and the elevated wings.

The **dragon** is there from the early seals with its shape settling later. In its animal life, the dragon is limited to quiescent poses as in 10.112 to 10.118. It is never involved in animal attacks and even in its peaceful life it is never shown in fecundity themes. The dragon's main role is symbolic. It is a creature linked to plants and sky symbols as in 10.119 and 10.120. It finds its home in marshy lands growing palm and papyrus plants as in 10.115 to 10.117. Thus, it is identified with the Papyrus Garden of the supernatural world. It is the identifying familiar of the Dragon Lady as in 10.121 to 10.123. She appropriately rides her dragon familiar side-saddle as in 10.121 and 10.122 while she is carried along in her dragon grand boat across shallow waters to arrive at a shrine. Many of these classic representations come from LM I sealings, thus placing the dragon securely as a significant fantastic creature of Minoan High Art.

The **genius**, of course, never really has an animal life. It always performs in a symbolic way. Its primary role, as seen in 10.133 to 10.137, is to hold the ewer, a vessel containing water, which provides the link between its Thoueris origin in the wide Nile marshes and its new domicile in Crete of the narrow mountain stream. This nurturing fertility role (a role also enacted by Thoueris) sees the genius associated with plants and water. With the physical change of acquiring the Minoan male's cinched waist, the genius assumes a male persona and gravitates towards male company and pursuits. Accordingly, we may be quite justified in using the masculine pronoun. In 10.139 and 10.140 he assumes the role of successful hunter, either by directly spearing the quarry or by protecting a human hunter. The genius role is further elevated when, through iconographic substitution, he takes on the roles of the deity. He is seen in the Master of Animals antithetical group as Lion Master in 10.141 and in the VIP with familiar *Icon*

28 The golden eagle, *Aquila chrysaetos*, and Bonelli's eagle, *Aquila fasciata*.

as Bull Lord and Lion Lord in 10.142 to 10.144. This elevation of the genius role beyond server/helper/guardian into a higher sphere gives Fritz Blakolmer cause to claim for the genius the status of “minor deity”²⁹, a claim with which I agree. In summary, adding to its original ewer-bearing persona which survives to the end, the genius becomes the successful predator, protector of human hunters, server to deities, Master of Animals and surrogate Lion and Bull Lord.

The Fabulous Five

The exotic animals, monkey and lion, and the three fantastic creatures, griffin, dragon and genius, form a distinct iconographic group emanating from the east that became thoroughly Aegeanised in their new domicile³⁰. Finding an appropriate title for this group of rather disparate individuals is solved by turning to their origins and naming them “The Fabulous Five”, with the word “fabulous” used in its original definition of “told about in fables”. Their identity is not sourced in observable fact but comes from the human imagination which creates stories about supernatural or extraordinary persons or incidents.

It is the supernatural and the extraordinary that are the key words for the role played by the Fabulous Five in Minoan art and thought. Notwithstanding the fact that the monkey and lion are living animals, they do come from lands far away from Crete. Thus, their essential character is readily aligned with that of the three fantastic creatures that also come from a distant world, albeit the world of the gods. In Minoan thought and art, all five belong to a mystical and mavelous supernatural world. Yet there is, of course, a parallel universe in Aegean art where daily human activity and endemic fauna are the subjects. The agrimi, stag, boar, bull and ram are favourite motifs and humans perform ceremonies, tend their herds, go hunting and fight battles. These images do incorporate ideas of pious worship, animal fertility and human courage but all these concepts are tied into life as it is lived daily. However, the iconography clearly distinguishes this earthly abode from the supernatural realm and instances the times when the Fabulous Five can leave the supernatural world and cross the boundary into the world of humans. As great predators, the lion and griffin can attack indigenous prey like the agrimi, stag and bull, thus bringing supernatural power to achieve hunting dominance. The lion as quarry becomes the ultimate test for male bravery in the hunt when it is raised to great stature to contest the human hunter. As intermediary and protector, the monkey and the genius guide and help humans meet deities. Yet, it is always clear that the Fabulous Five define the supernatural realm in which anthropomorphic gods display their power and numinous forces exert their control. The Fabulous Five identify the deities and personify mighty strength, powerful aggression, successful hunting and the fecundity of the herds. All Five allow humans access to the supernatural through their roles as guardians of potent symbols. The monkey and the genius enjoy a semi-divine status. So, there are three inescapable facts from the seal evidence: the exotic and fantastic Fabulous Five create the visual statement of the Minoan metaphysical world; the Fabulous Five comprise the most significant transference from the east; and that transference begins very early. As we try to appreciate the full significance of this transference and the resulting artistic creativity that produced the Fabulous Five, we must acknowledge that they come with other motifs and materials that magnify their influence. The manifestation of the transference in art starts in the EM III seal images and is complete regarding the full complement of creatures and the detail of their depiction by the end of MM II. Yet, these are simply the dates by which we can track the existence of this supernatural world. It might have existed in the thought processes of the Cretan peoples long before.

Returning to the proposals made above as to how these creatures came to migrate into the iconography, we may allow that all the avenues proposed might have had some effect. However, once one accepts the momentous role of the Fabulous Five in establishing concepts of the supernatural world, a mix of travel, trade and souvenirs does not seem to provide a sufficient base for such all-encompassing influence. It becomes necessary to face the fact that there may be more to immigrant success than just knowing of the

29 Blakolmer *supra* fn. 2, 166 and Diagram 19.

30 See also Chapin and Pareja 2020, 215-225 and ZOIA, 125-134.

taxonomy of the living animals or having some familiarity with artistic renderings in their home artistic traditions of the east. There are links to Egyptian fauna and Egyptian art, especially for the monkey, lion and genius. At the time when the first indications of these links are seen in art, seals were made of hippopotamus ivory, seal shapes were hippopotamus tusks, monkeys and lions, while the iconographic repertoire also invested in palm, palmette and papyrus designs. All this suggests that there might have been a wave of early settlers bringing with them memories of their Egyptian homeland, only to have the memories coalesce around the Fabulous Five to create a metaphysical world for Aegean beliefs. Yet this is not all. The earliest depictions of lions show them of solid build and walking in animal file, a standard early Mesopotamian motif, as are winged creatures and long-necked quadrupeds. These source images for lions, griffins and dragons might have come to Crete when peoples from Syria or beyond pioneered early travel routes that were expanded in Middle and Late Bronze times. We know that migrants from the east came to Crete long before we can trace their influence in art, but now there is reason to review the timing and the routes. The seal evidence suggests that the peoples from Egypt and Syria who did come to Crete in the third millennium or earlier brought with them their own metaphysical concepts. This would explain why these exotic and fantastic creatures could take such a hold of metaphysical imagery so early and so thoroughly in the Aegean.

Setting aside for the moment the possibility that these exotic and fantastic immigrants might have been lodged in the folk memory long before we can track them in the images, we nevertheless must recognise that, in the seal record, the immigrants have had a thousand years to settle into Minoan thought and Minoan art before the time of the second palaces. The timeline of the Fabulous Five flourishes encompasses 13 centuries of seal design from their arrival in the Early Seal Period to the heady life of display and influence in Minoan High Art. On the way, interest in the animal life that these creatures might once have had waned, and the symbolic representation of the metaphysical world became their pre-eminent role. The Fabulous Five members interact with ritual symbols, guard buildings, become violent and successful hunters, help humans, identify gods as their familiars and even, sometimes, stand in the deity's place. In summary, the Fabulous Five arrive early, stay late and together help create a fantastic other-world where the Minoan mind can explore concepts of fertility, renewal, power and aggression and where the humble mortal can safely access the numinous.

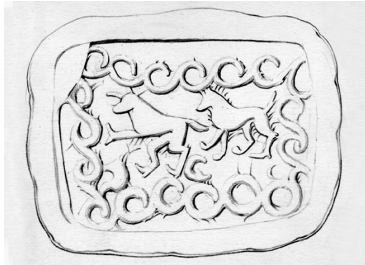
Comparisons with Images in Other Media

1. Monkeys gathering saffron crocus flowers growing in a rocky landscape in the Saffron Gatherer Fresco, Knossos.
AWP, Plate 4, 1.
The Blue Monkeys Fresco from Room B 6 at Acrotiri, Thera.
AP, Plates 12 and 13 and detail AWP, plate 4, 4..
2. Griffins attacking deer on an ivory pyxis from the Agora, Athens.
Mylonas 1966, Plate 141.
3. A sphinx with wings displayed on an ivory plaque from Spata.
CM, 216.
4. Depictions of the genius on a fresco fragment from Mycenae.
CM, Plate XLIII.
5. The Lion Gate at Mycenae.
The relief sculpture occupying the relieving triangle above the gate shows rampant lions in the *Icon* of animals at the grand pillar.
CM, Plate 141.

Plates 10.1 to 10.156

Monkey, Lion and Crocodile

Monkey – Early Seal Period



10.1 – monkey, lion
(II.1 253/EM III-MM IA)



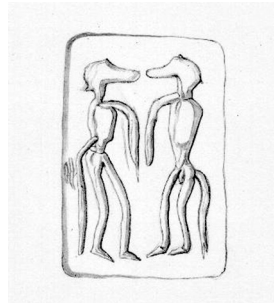
10.2 – monkeys
(II.1 473/EM III-MM IA)



10.3 – monkey
(VII 6b/MM II)



10.4 – monkey
(III 236c/MM II)



10.5 – monkeys
(X 50b/MM II)

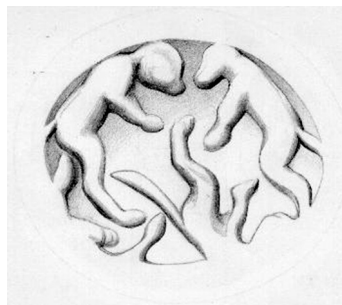


10.6 – monkey
(II.5 297/MM II)

Monkey – Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art



10.7 – monkeys
(II.8 286/MM III-LM I)



10.8 – monkeys
(V 233/MM III-LM I)



10.9 – monkey
(II.6 282/LM I)



10.10 – monkey, woman
(III 358/LM I)



10.11 – monkey
(II.6 73/LM I)



10.12 – monkey, VIP
(III 357/LM I)

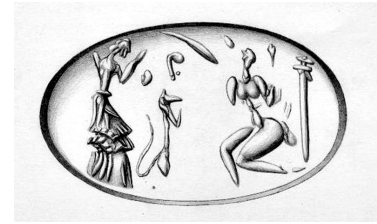
Monkey – *Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art (cont.)*



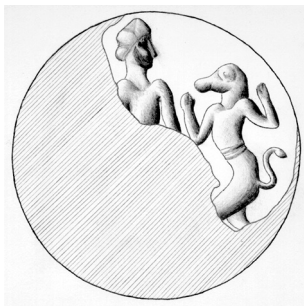
10.13 – monkey, vase
(III 377/LM I)



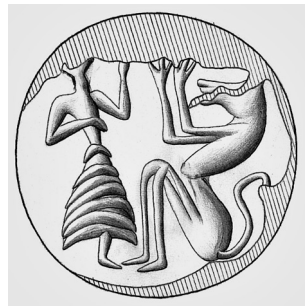
10.14 – monkey, altar
(II.6 74/LM I)



10.15 – monkey, woman, VIP
(II.3 103/LM I-LM II)



10.16 – monkey, VIP
(I 377/LB I-LB II)



10.17 – monkey as VIP
(II.7 24/LM I)

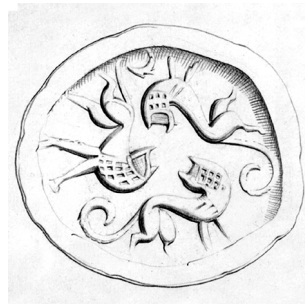


10.18 – monkey as VIP
(II.8 262/LM I-LM II)

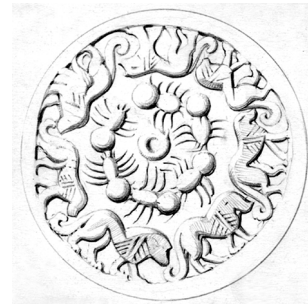
Lion – *Early Seal Period*



10.19 – lion
(XII 8a/EM III-MM IA)



10.20 – lion
(II.1 224a/EM III-MM IA)



10.21 – lion, spider
(II.1 248a/EM III-MM IA)



10.22 – Lion Lady
(II.1 55/EM III-MM IA)

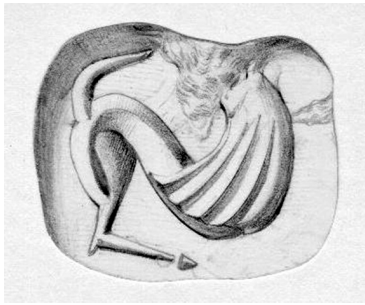


10.23 – lion
(II.5 270/MM II)



10.24 – lion
(VS 1B 331/MM II-MM III?)

Lion – Early Seal Period (cont.)



10.25 – lion
(II.2 245c/MM II)



10.26 – lion
(II.2 48/MM II-MM III)



10.27 – lion
(XII 135a/MM II-MM III)

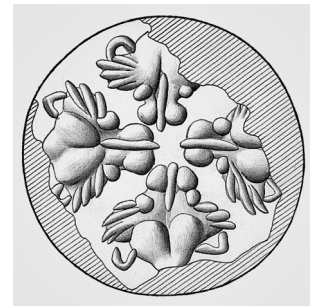
Lion – Minoan High Art



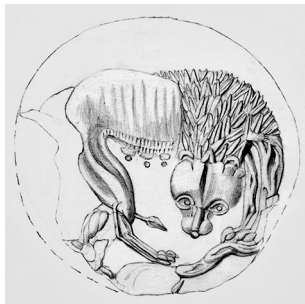
10.28 – lion
(II.8 298/LM I)



10.29 – lion
(X 250/LM I)



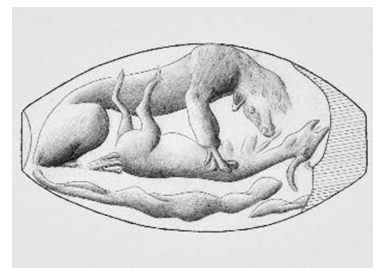
10.30 – lion head
(II.7 76/LM I)



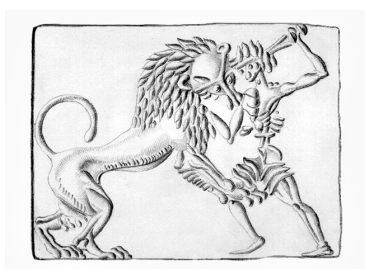
10.31 – lion
(VI 355/LB I-LB II)



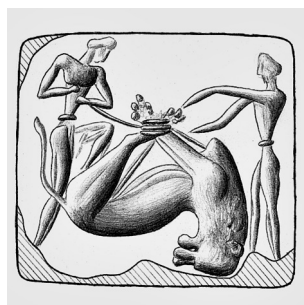
10.32 – lion, deer
(II.7 100/LM I)



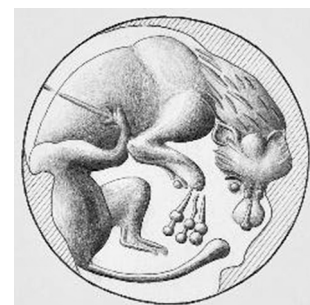
10.33 – lion feeding on the catch
(II.6 94/LM I)



10.34 – lion, hunter
(I 9/LH I)



10.35 – lion, hunter
(II.7 33/LM I)

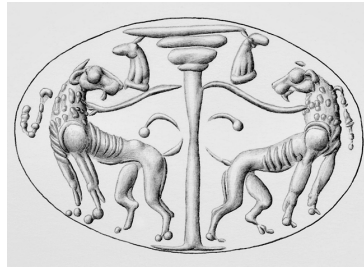


10.36 – lion distressed, scratching,
contorted (II.6 91/LM I)

Lion – Minoan High Art (cont.)



10.37 – lion, gate shrine
(II.7 74/LM I)



10.38 – lion, grand pillar
(VI 364/LB I-LB II)



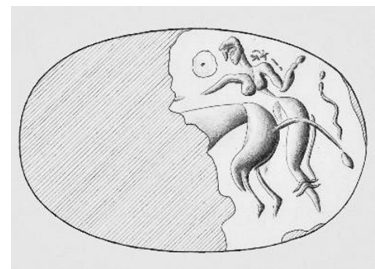
10.39 – lion
(II.3 302/LM I)



10.40 – Lion Mistress
(I 145/LB I-LB II)



10.41 – Lion Lord
(IX 114/LM I)

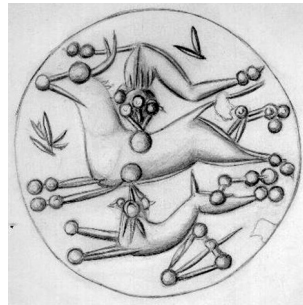


10.42 – Lion Lady
(II.6 35/LM I)

Lion – Legacy Period



10.43 – lion, bull
(I 185/LB II-LB IIIA1)



10.44 – lion, bull
(II.4 202/LM IIIA1)



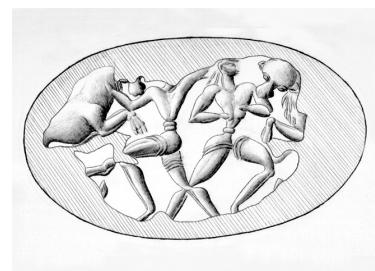
10.45 – lion suckling
(II.3 344/LB IIIA1-LB IIIA2)



10.46 – hunter, lion
(XI 272/LH II-LH IIIA1)



10.47 – hunter, lion
(I 165/LB IIIA)

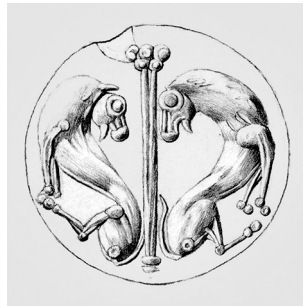


10.48 – wrestler, lion
(I 307/LB II-LB IIIA1)

Lion – Legacy Period (cont.)



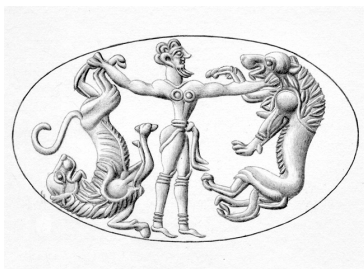
10.49 – lion, grand pillar
(II.8 290/LM IIIA1)



10.50 – lion, orb rod
(VI 365/LB II-LB IIIA1)



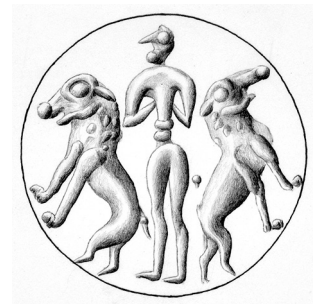
10.51 – lion, curved altar, sunburst
(XI 47/LB II-LB IIIA1)



10.52 – Lion Master
(I 89/LB II)



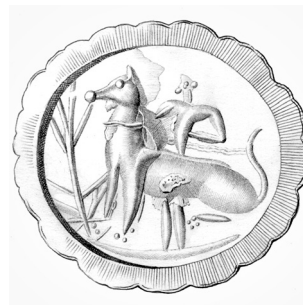
10.53 – Lion Master
(II.8 249/LM IIIA1)



10.54 – Lion Lord/Master
(III 361/LM II-LM IIIA1)



10.55 – Lion Mistress
(XI 112/LH II-LH IIIA1)

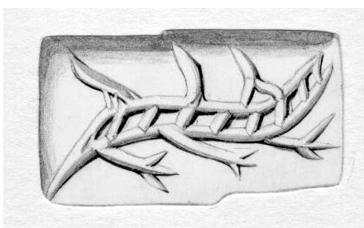


10.56 – Lion Lord
(I 512/LB II-LB IIIA1)

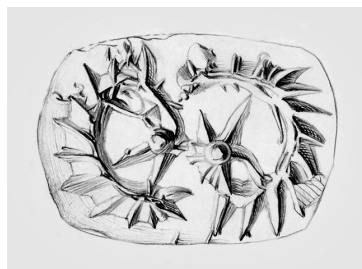


10.57 – Lion Lord
(X 135/LB II-LB IIIA1)

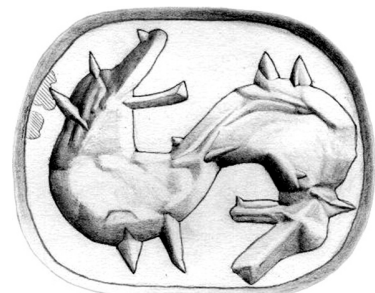
Crocodile – Early Seal Period



10.58 – crocodile
(II 2 315a/MM II)



10.59 – crocodile
(VI 59b/MM II)



10.60 – crocodile
(XI 141a/MM II)

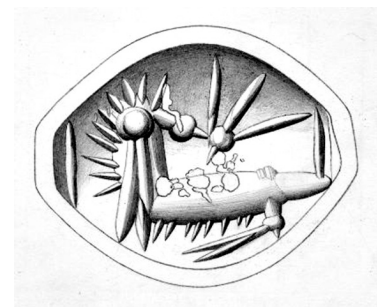
Crocodile – Early Seal Period (cont.) **Crocodile – Minoan High Art**



10.61 – crocodile
(IV D32/MM II-MM III)



10.62 – crocodile, griffin
(XII 291/LM I)



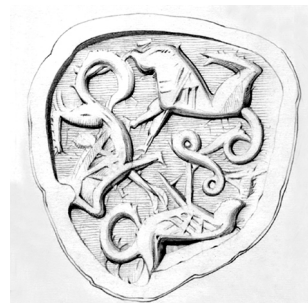
10.63 – crocodile
(IX D15/LB I-LB II)

Griffin and Sphinx

Griffin – Early Seal Period



10.64 – griffin
(II.1 250a/EM III-MM IA)



10.65 – griffin, lion
(II.1 249/EM III-MM IA)



10.66 – griffin
(II.2 151c/MM II)



10.67 – griffin
(II.5 318/MM II)



10.68 – griffin
(II.5 317/MM II)



10.69 – griffin
(XI 6/MM II-MM III)

Griffin – Minoan High Art



10.70 – griffin
(II.3 79/LM I)



10.71 – griffin
(I 271/LB I-LB II)

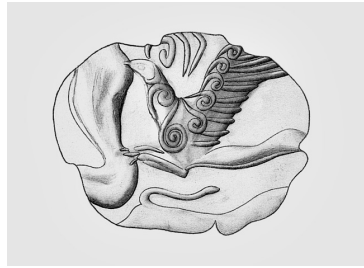


10.72 – griffins with young
(II.6 101/LM I)

Griffin – Minoan High Art (cont.)



10.73 – griffin, lion, chasing
(II.6 103/LM I)



10.74 – griffin, lion, crunching
(II.7 96/LM I)



10.75 – griffin, stag, carrying the catch
(V 642/LB I-LB II)



10.76 – lion, griffin, crunching
(II.8 359/LM I)



10.77 – griffins, tree of life
(II.6 102/LM I)



10.78 – griffin
(II.7 87/LM I)



10.79 – Griffin Lion Master
(II.3 167/LM I-LM II)



10.80 – Griffin Mistress
(VI 317/LB I-LB II)



10.81 – Griffin Lord
(II.6 29/LM I)



10.82 – Griffin Lord
(I 223/LB I-LB II)

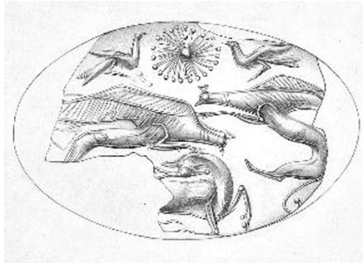


10.83 – griffin grand boat
(II.6 20/LM I)

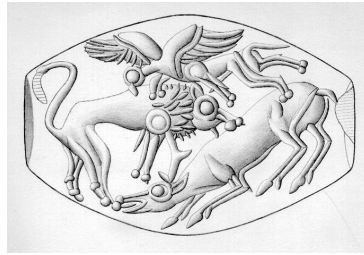


10.84 – griffin chariot
(II.8 193/LM I)

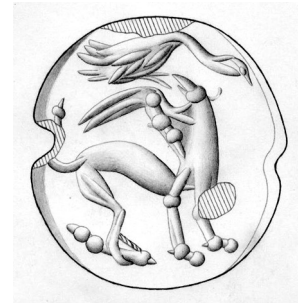
Griffin – Legacy Period



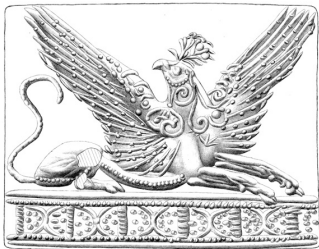
10.85 – griffin, stag, bird, sunburst
(II.8 192/LM IIIA1-LM IIIA2)



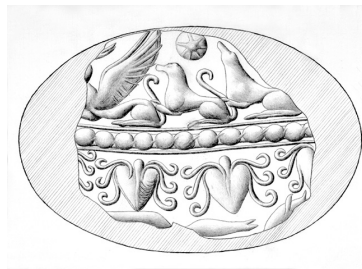
10.86 – griffin, lion, stag
(VS 1A 202/LB IIIA1)



10.87 – griffin, bird
(VS 1B 101/LB IIIA1)



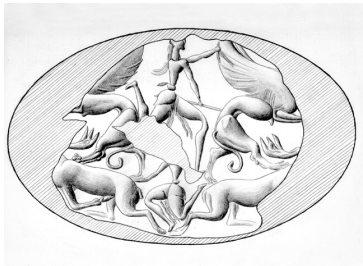
10.88 – griffin
(I 293/LB II)



10.89 – griffin, lion
(I 329/LB II-LB IIIA1)



10.90 – griffins, grand pillar
(I 98/LB II-LB IIIA1)



10.91 – Griffin Master
(I 324/LB II-LB IIIA1)



10.92 – Griffin Mistress
(II.3 63/LB II-LB IIIA1)



10.93 – Griffin Lady
(VIII 95/LM IIIA1-LM IIIA2)



10.94 – Griffin Lady
(VS 1B 429/LB II-LB IIIA1)



10.95 – Griffin Lady
(I 128/LB II-LB IIIA1)



10.96 – griffin chariot
(VS 1B 137/LB II-LB IIIA1)

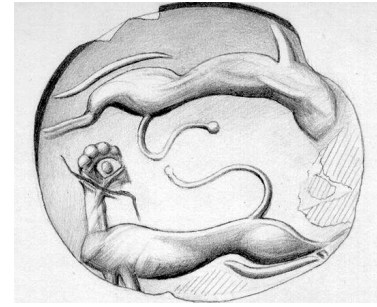
Sphinx – Early Seal Period



10.97 – sphinx
(VI 128/MM II)



10.98 – sphinx
(III 230b/MM II)



10.99 – sphinx
(VS 1A 134/LM I)

Sphinx – Legacy Period



10.100 – sphinx, tree of life
(I 87/LB II-LB IIIA1)



10.101 – sphinx
(I 129/LB II-LB IIIA1)



10.102 – sphinx
(II.3 118/LB II-III A1)



10.103 – sphinx
(VS 3 352/LM IIIA1)



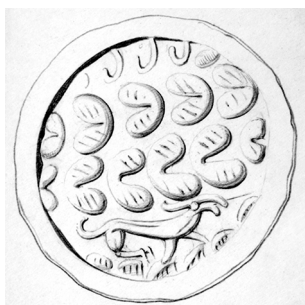
10.104 – sphinx
(VS 3 359/LM IIIA1)



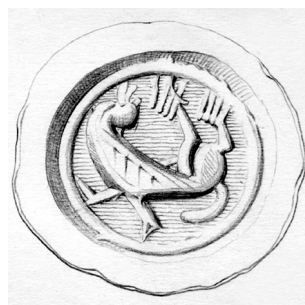
10.105 – sphinx
(VS 1B 102/LB II-LB IIIA1)

Dragon

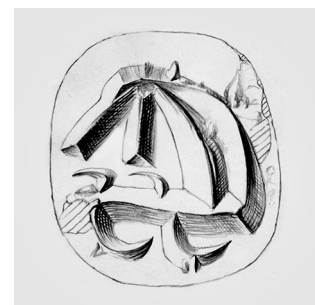
Dragon – Early Seal Period



10.106 – dragon
(II.1 295a/EM III-MM IA)



10.107 – dragon
(II.1 295b/EM III MM IA)

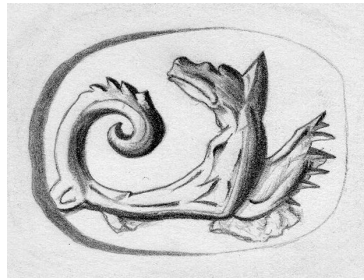


10.108 – dragon
(VI 52b/MM II)

Dragon – Early Seal Period (cont.)



10.109 – dragon
(X 245a/MM II)



10.110 – dragon
(VIII 20b/MM II)

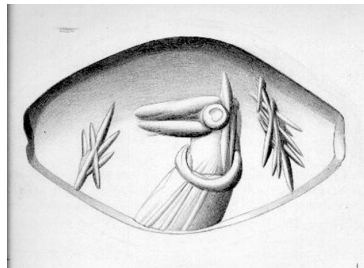


10.111 – dragon
(XI 291a/MM III-LM I)

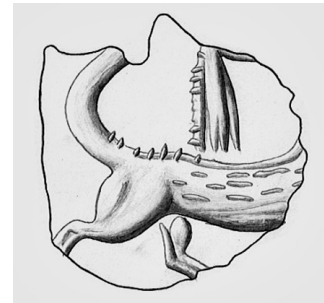
Dragon – Minoan High Art



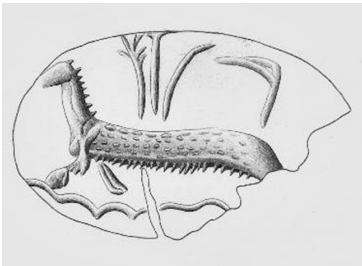
10.112 – dragon
(XII 293/LM I)



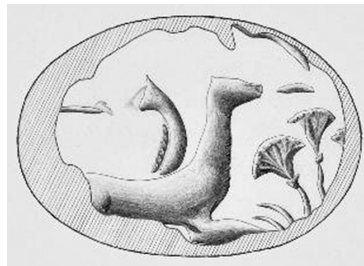
10.113 – dragon head
(V 268a/LM I)



10.114 – dragon
(II.7 77/LM I)



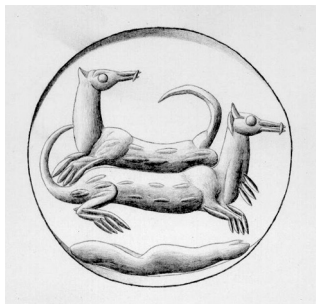
10.115 – dragon, waveline
(II.6 262/LM I)



10.116 – dragon
(II.6 34/LM I)



10.117 – dragon
(VI 362/LM I)



10.118 – dragons
(VS 1B 76/LB I-LB II)

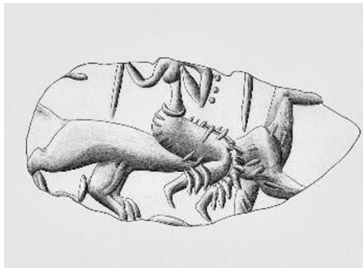


10.119 – dragon
(V 581/LM I)



10.120 – dragon, sunbursts
(XII 290/LM I)

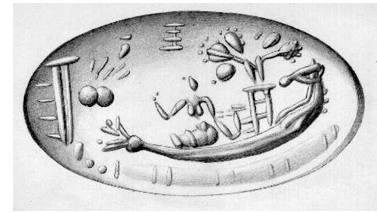
Dragon – Minoan High Art (cont.)



10.121 – Dragon Lady
(II.6 33/LM I)

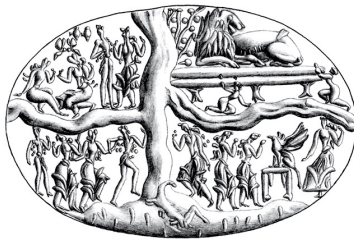


10.122 – Dragon Lady, Griffin Lord
(VI 321/LM I-LM II)



10.123 – dragon grand boat
(II.3 252/LM I)

Dragon – Legacy Period



10.124 – dragon, griffin, lion
(VI 277/LM I)



10.125 – dragon
(II.8 373/LM IIIA1?)



10.126 – Dragon Lady
(I 167/LB II-LB IIIA1)

Genius

Genius – Early Seal Period



10.127 – scarab
(II.1 283/Dynasty 11-12)

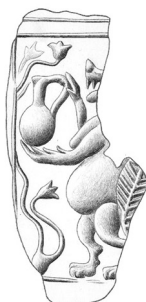


10.128 – genius
(II.5 321/MM II)

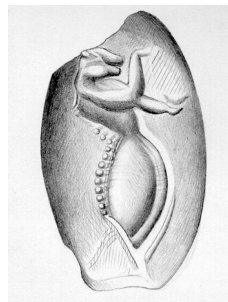


10.129 – genius
(II.5 322/MM II)

Genius – Minoan High Art



10.130 – genius
(II.8 195/MM II-MM III)



10.131 – genius
(VS 1A 128/LM I)

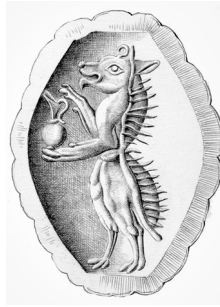


10.132 – genius
(II.6 98/LM I)

Genius – Minoan High Art (cont.)



10.133 – genius
(XII 212/LM I)



10.134 – genius
(I 232/LB I-LB II)



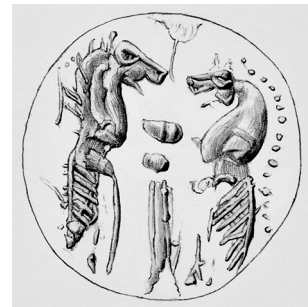
10.135 – genius
(XI 35/LB I-LB II)



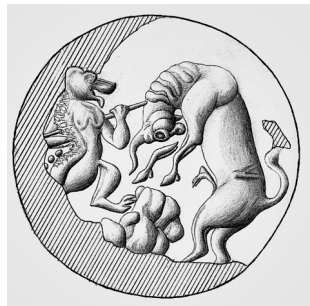
10.136 – genius, altar, double horns
(I 231/LB I-LB II)



10.137 – genius, tree of life
(VI 310/ LB I-LB II)



10.138 – genius, grand pillar
(VI 309/LM I-LM II)



10.139 – genius, bull
(II.7 31/LM I)



10.140 – genius, hunter
(XI 208/LB I-LB II)



10.141 – genius as Lion Master
(I 172/LB I-LB II)



10.142 – genius, cow
(VI 304/LB I-LB II)



10.143 – genius, lion
(II.8 198/LM I-LM II)

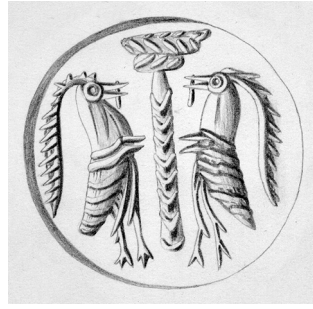


10.144 – genius, lion
(VI 306/LB I-LB II)

Genius – Legacy Period



10.145 – genius, orb rod
(V 440/LB II-LB IIIA1)



10.146 – genius, grand pillar
(VIII 65/LM II-LM IIIA1)



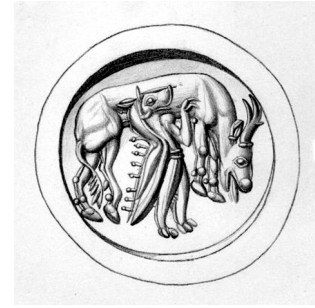
10.147 – genius, agrimi
(II.3 105a/LB II-LB IIIA1)



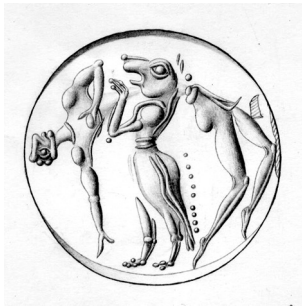
10.148 – genius, stag
(XI 38/LH II-LH IIIA1)



10.149 – genius, lions
(XI 37/LH II-LH IIIA1)



10.150 – genius, bull
(IX 129/LB II-LB IIIA1)



10.151 – genius, man
(VS 1B 153/LB II-LB IIIA1)



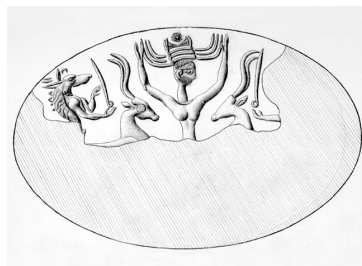
10.152 – genius as Hound Master
(I 161/LB IIIA1-LB IIIA2)



10.153 – Genius Master
(XI 290/LH II-LH IIIA1)



10.154 – Mighty Lord, genius
(V 201/LH II-LH IIIA1)



10.155 – Bull Mistress, genius
(I 379/LB II-LB IIIA1)



10.156 – Great Lady, genius
(I 179/LB II)

Chapter 11 The Lesser Spirits

There are a great number of images comprising various combinations and amalgams of human parts, animal parts and inanimate objects. Some of these combinations result in forms that may believably be animate beings while others simply remain as a collection of pieces joined together¹. Images of hybrid humans and fantastic combinations begin in the Early Seal Period and enjoy a renewed burst of life in Minoan High Art, only for most to be lost again in the subsequent Legacy Period.

Hybrid Women

Hybrid Women – *Early Seal Period* (Plates 11.1 to 11.6)

The early hybrid women already have the upright stance of the human with bird/animal heads. The first hybrid women are birdwomen as in 11.1 to 11.3. They have a bird head with clearly defined beak and wings spread each side in the pose that was to remain characteristic of the type throughout all periods. They may clearly wear a skirt as in 11.3 or just have the suggestion of it, while they may have feet as in 11.1 and 11.3 or a bird tail as in 11.2. Two bird-headed women in 11.4 hold hands beneath a triple bud and may be meant to be holding the symbol. In 11.5 two women with animal heads gesture to a whirl sunburst. However, these two images may be representations of humans wearing masks rather than being hybrids. The composite in 11.6 shows various animal features but fuses all of them into an upright human shape.

Hybrid Women – *Minoan High Art* (Plates 11.7 to 11.20)

The profusion of birdwoman subjects in Minoan High Art is notable, with all handled as the sole subject, usually within the circle constraint of the lentoid as in 11.7 to 11.10 and 11.12 to 11.18. The birdwoman always has her lower torso shown as wearing a woman's skirt or long pants and with her wings raised, usually fanning out each side of her upper body. Feet are optional. When shown, they may face outwards but usually face in the same direction as the head. In most cases the head is a bird head shown profile although animal heads are sometimes substituted. The classic birdwoman form is a standing woman shown frontally with a flounced skirt and wings displayed and with a bird head shown in profile as in 11.7 to 11.10. The birdwomen may also wear a frilled skirt as in 11.11, 11.13, 11.14 and 11.19², a fringed skirt as in 11.12 or long pants as in 11.18 and 11.20. Sometimes the birdwomen are seated as in 11.18 and 11.20. When a different faunal head is substituted it may be horned or may have a snout. Curved agrimi horns are seen in 11.16. The snout heads sometimes match the heads of dragons with their "knobs" at the ends of the "beaks" and the distinct large round eye as in 11.17 to 11.19. On occasions the birdwoman may be shown with sunbursts as in 11.10 or with branches as in 11.13.

1 Search the IconAegean Database in the Element field on birdwoman, lionwoman, geniusman, bullman, agrimiman, lionman and stagman. Search in the Icon field on hybrid woman and hybrid man. Search in the Theme field on hybrid humans and zakros fantasy.

Search the IconADict Database for the definition of each term or refer to IAS.

2 In the image in 11.19 the curved line behind the main figure is the wing in profile. The seal impression shows that this curved line actually has more definition than the simple line shown in the drawing and is comparable to the linear wings of many birdwomen.

Examples from the sub-set of birdwomen that appear in the Zakros fantasy images are discussed below under 11.79 to 11.87. Many of these birdwomen show variant heads and generously shaped bare breasts.

Hybrid Women – *Legacy Period* (Plate 11.21)

In this period the birdwomen are gone. A single lionwoman appears, accompanied by eight shields and a bull as in 11.21.

Hybrid Men

Hybrid Men – *Early Seal Period* (Plates 11.22 to 11.24)

A rather linear depiction of a winged man as in 11.22 and a composite being with bird features as in 11.23 begin the early hybrid men images. There is also a composite made of human legs as in the triskeles moving clockwise in 11.24.

Hybrid Men – *Minoan High Art* (Plates 11.25 to 11.33)

When images of hybrid men appear in Minoan High Art towards the end of the Period, they are far less common than the prolific birdwomen. Hybrid men are handled as the sole subject, usually within the circle constraint of the lentoid. Winged men are seen in 11.25 and 11.26. One of these has a human head and holds a stag in a carrying the catch *Icon*. New hybrid images now appear: the agrimiman and the bullman as in 11.27 to 11.33. Their classic form is of a Minoan male wearing belt and kilt for the lower torso and animal protome for the upper torso. The bullman and agrimiman are regularly shown profile in athletic poses of running or somersaulting. In the somersaulting depiction the animal forelegs act rather as arms helping turn the creature as in 11.28 to 11.30. Heads are usually also shown profile but can be shown frontal as in 11.31. A variation on the bullman image is to have two sets of human legs conjoined with a frontal bull head as in 11.33. Added details include the sunburst in 11.31 and the eight shield in 11.32.

Hybrid Men – *Legacy Period* (Plates 11.34 to 11.54)

The few winged men seen earlier are followed here by a sketchy image as a Lion Master in 11.34. However, the hybrid men seen nascent in the previous period now take the stage as the pre-eminent male fantasy being. There is a geniusman 11.35, a lionman 11.36 to 11.40, an agrimiman 11.48 to 11.52, a stagman 11.40, 11.53 and 11.54, and, the favourite, a bullman 11.41 to 11.49. The male lower torso now rarely shows any clothing but the waist join is always marked by a belt or significant constriction. The whole figure is regularly seen in profile and shown in a somersaulting pose, occasionally with a frontal head as with the lionman in 11.36 to 11.38 and the bullman in 11.46 and 11.49. The variation of having two animal bodies sharing one set of human legs is seen in the lionagrimiman in 11.38, the bullagrimiman in 11.48 and 11.49 and the double agrimiman in 11.50. A one only standing bullman with frontal head gives the chest gesture³ in 11.46. Accompanying detail includes the sunburst in 11.41, 11.48 and 11.52, the eight shield in 11.42, 11.43, 11.49, 11.51 and 11.52, the cloak knot in 11.39 and 11.44, a dolphin in 11.44 and a new motif, the impaled triangle, in 11.42, 11.43, 11.45 and 11.48.

Frontal Faces

Frontal Faces – *Early Seal Period* (Plates 11.55 to 11.59)

Frontal faces appear in MM II as the main subject. The being with upraised hands in 11.55 has three items, perhaps horns or sprouting plants, springing from her/his head. In other examples, 11.56 to 11.59, the frontal faces seem barely human. They have quite distinct facial characteristics, large round

³ See the discussion on the chest gesture in Chapter 12 below.

eyes seemingly starting from their sockets, a small mouth with buckteeth if shown, hair growing spiked up from the forehead and then in curled tresses each side of the head, and protruding ears with round earrings.

Frontal Faces – *Minoan High Art* (Plate 11.60)

The debased frontal face in 11.60 shares details with the earlier forms but otherwise frontal faces do not seem to be continued in this Period. Several Zakro fantasy assemblages show staring frontal faces with spiked hair as in 11.91 to 11.93.

Frontal Faces – *Legacy Period* (Plates 11.61 to 11.66)

The frontal face in 11.61 differs from the earlier forms but is quite an arresting image. Its hair covers the ears, and the eyes appear shut. In 11.62 the sphinx head is shown frontal face in the compositional device of the one head pair. The frontal faces in 11.63 to 11.66 show various details that link them to earlier images. Some examples have staring eyes, protruding ears or spiked hairstyles but there are no buckteeth, earrings or long curled tresses. Furthermore, these frontal faces are not the main subject but are placed within larger animal compositions where the animals do not register their presence.

Varied Combinations

Varied Combinations – *Early Seal Period* (Plates 11.67 to 11.78)

Then there are the fantastic combinations of human/animal/bird parts that do not result in credible beings⁴. These composites begin early when heads, legs, body parts and wings are joined in whirling shapes as in 11.67 to 11.72, mimicking geometric zweipass, dreipass and vierpass spirals. Spiral whirls of four or six arms terminate in animal heads in 11.67 to 11.69, with a particularly striking design in the six heads of 11.69 which may be representing dragon heads. The three animal haunches in 11.70 join in a parallel to the human leg triskeles of 11.24. The double bird joinings of 11.71 and 11.72 both move anti-clockwise. In 11.73 and 11.74 bird heads are linked in a wheel-like formation. Convoluted forms fill the seal face in 11.75, suggesting crocodile shapes. The conjoined protomes in 11.76 create a fantastic creature that may be akin to the early dragon identities. The amalgam of curves and toothed poles as in 11.77 and 11.78 suggest a source in human constructions.

Zakros Fantasy Images

The vein of fantasy in Minoan High Art is particularly concentrated in a special group of seals emanating from the site of Kato Zakro, described here as the Zakros fantasy images. Most Zakro images are combinations that create forms of unusual and often surprising mixtures. The whole set is not illustrated here but examples are given of the range of subject matter. Their designs at first appear to be somewhat distanced from mainstream Minoan iconography but a closer look reveals that they draw heavily on previous and contemporary seal subject matter and seal design composition. The organisation of the discussion on their iconography below recognises this reliance on mainstream iconographic features in that hybrid humans are described first and then the varied combinations are treated by assembling elements either around human body parts, around animal body parts or around inanimate items. These assemblages do not result in an animate fantastic being.

Zakros Fantasy Images: hybrid women – *Minoan High Art* (Plates 11.79 to 11.87)

The birdwomen in 11.79 to 11.83 have the characteristic displayed wings and female clothing of flounced skirt or, in the case of 11.81, flounced pants. The detail of the clothing as to pattern and flounce

⁴ See also the discussion on conjoined animals, Anastasiadou ZOIA, 191-198.

is something to note. The birdwoman in 11.82 is shown profile and with arms like bird legs as well as wings. Variations with an animal head in 11.79 and 11.80 match heads in other examples. However, the substitution of a warrior's crested tusk helmet as the head in 11.83 is new. When women's breasts are added they are generously proportioned as in 11.80 to 11.82. However, the Zakros fantasy images depict other hybrid women that share some of the birdwoman characteristics. In 11.84 the hybrid has breasts and a bird fan tail, as well as the tusk helmet, but has no wings. In 11.85 the birdwoman with animal head has wings and a fan tail but has dispensed with the skirt. Her frontal naked female body presents bare breasts and legs spread. In 11.86 the hybrid has a bird head, arms, breasts and a fan tail but no wings – and do we have five eggs around her waist? In 11.87 wings, fan tail and breasts are assembled in a birdwoman pose with aniconic head. Such assemblages of iconographic elements may not produce a birdwoman per se but there is no doubt that these images are evocative of the birdwoman persona.

Zakros Fantasy Images: hybrid men – *Minoan High Art* (Plates 11.88 to 11.90)

There are fewer hybrid men than women in Zakros Fantasy images. Examples of a winged man show the man wearing shorts, in a running pose and with wings spread, as in 11.88 and 11.89; only one has the head remaining, an agrimi head. Two winged men are shown in a mirror reverse composition in 11.90.

Zakros Fantasy Images: human parts plus – *Minoan High Art* (Plates 11.91 to 11.99)

These images take some human body parts and add animal body parts and/or inanimate items. In 11.91 to 11.93 the frontal face is featured with spiked hair and varying treatment of the eyes. Additions include bird wings and tail, human legs, lion legs and bat membrane. The human head is seen profile in 11.94 and 11.95 with additions of butterfly wings, lion legs, plants and large wing feathers. In 11.96 a human lower torso supports a huge lion head. In 11.97 to 11.99 human arms, legs and breasts are joined to stag antlers, animal-headed creatures and bird fan tails.

Zakros Fantasy Images: animal parts plus – *Minoan High Art* (Plates 11.100 to 11.105)

These images take some animal body part and add other animal body parts and/or inanimate items as in 11.100 to 11.105. There are bird and butterfly parts, floral elements, lion legs and creatures with animal heads. In 11.105 the frontal boar head is placed across a single horn bow.

Zakros Fantasy Images: inanimate plus – *Minoan High Art* (Plates 11.106 to 11.108)

These images take various inanimate items and fuse or juxtapose them into a design as in 11.106 to 11.108. There are horn bows, plant forms, flaring wings and fantastic structures.

Iconographic Interpretation: Helpful Spirits, Malevolent Forces

What are we to make of these composite beings and varied combinations? What caused their creation? Why did they suddenly become more popular in Minoan High Art only for most to disappear after the LM IB destructions? Some suggestions are made here as to their meaning for Minoan art. The significant shifts in subject matter away from fantastic combinations in the Legacy Period⁵, except for the continuing portrayal of some hybrid men, are addressed in Chapter 14.

The hybrid and composite beings are interpreted here as being spirit forces and are termed the Lesser Spirits in relation to the more powerful Great Gods addressed in Chapter 12. As we continue with the interpretation of these spirit beings we should be aware of one characteristic of the group that sets it apart from all other iconographic content: the portrayal of members of this group is restricted to seal images. Whereas other iconographic content is shared across the other media, as we have consistently referenced in the Comparisons listed at the end of each Chapter, these hybrid and composite beings do

⁵ See also Aruz 2020, 227-235, for views on human-animal composites.

not take the step into the wider artistic milieu. The Comparisons List is blank for this Chapter, requiring us to ponder the reasons for this absence. Is the Lesser Spirit content too personal and too private to the owner of the seal to be shared widely? Is the content not of sufficient interest to the ruling elites to be included in their pictorial programs? Or is there some other reason for its seal-only display, a reason we cannot now trace? Yet again, the Aegean silence confounds us.

That extraordinary creative burst, the Zakros Fantasy images on the Zakros Sealings, have long been a fascination to all who see them. Why are these particular pieces and body parts chosen, why are these strange joinings made, and what do they mean? Answers have ranged from seeing an idiosyncratic style from east Crete, to a collection of images lying completely outside the Minoan seal repertoire, to the crazy outpourings of a demented individual. However, we can make some observations on pertinent iconographic details that can help relate this body of work to the wider Minoan repertoire. The first point to consider is that fantastic creations of all sorts are quite at home in Minoan art, whether they belong to the early combinations, to the Fabulous Five grouping discussed in the previous Chapter or to the myriad shapes and combinations described in this Chapter. The Zakros fantasy group is a particular outpouring of this familiarity with the fantastic. It comes from the hand of a particular artist or artists working in a particular place at a particular time, and its creations have no progeny. However, the human and animal body parts, the floral shapes and the inanimate objects employed to make these fantasy combinations are all found in mainstream Minoan seal iconography. The construction of the images uses regular Minoan design concepts and compositional devices like focus, symmetry, antithetical group and heraldic poses. Now, having established that the Zakros Fantasy images do not lie so far outside Minoan mainstream seal design as some would have, we do acknowledge that the particular Zakros fusion of these elements and syntax may imbue them with meanings that cannot be paralleled in mainstream iconography. For that reason, I will not attempt to uncover the meaning of each piece. Guidance in reading the Zakros images is provided by Judith Weingarten⁶ in her search to find the “Zakro Master”, by Olga Krzyszkowska⁷ in her overview and by Maria Anastasiadou⁸ through her continuing analyses.

The hybrid creatures and fantastic assemblages surveyed in this Chapter suggest spirit forces, which may be helpful or malevolent, at work on the Minoan psyche. The three thematic groups, the birdwomen, animalmen and frontal faces, give us a substantial number of examples which encapsulate these deep concerns. With the hybrid humans, the genius of the artist is to create fantastic features which are convincing as life forms⁹. The birdwomen spread their wings to take flight or are just about to fold them, having alighted from travels to spirit worlds. The animalmen somersault with all the vitality of the athletic male body and the source power of their animal half. The formation of both birdwomen and animalmen with animal upper bodies and human lower bodies gives them a cast that would be termed demon in the Near Eastern world but that does not necessarily mean that they are adoptions from the east¹⁰. With both, we appear to have very Minoan spirits, clothed in classic Minoan garb. The athletic somersaulting of the animalmen, so different from the standing eastern demons, is another iconographic detail that indicates a Minoan origin. The eidetic substrate of Minoan *Icon* composition may well have transmuted the visual imprint of bull sports activity, coalescing the leaper and the bull into one vibrant creature. The frontal faces, sometimes with bodies attached but always with frightful mien, suggest malevolent intentions. For human beings, there is always the fear that life forces may fail, that help may not come, that evil may wreak destruction. So, people create spirits to gain some control of their lives in the face of this uncertainty. No doubt the Minoans, too, shared these very human fears, being acutely

6 Weingarten 1983 and 1985, 167-179.

7 AS, 178-185.

8 Anastasiadou 2016, 77-85 and 2020, 5-10 and *Forthcoming*.

9 See also Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2010b, 93-106.

10 Veronica Dubcova sees connections with the east for her bull-man and bird-demon, Dubcova 2015, 221-244 and CANP, 205-222.

aware that there were life forces and animal powers that shaped their living world and malevolent spirits waiting to harm them. They might have prayed to their Great Gods but they also held in awe these lesser spirits which provided an alternative access to the supernatural world.

Birdwomen Take Flight

In many cultures, both ancient and modern, the addition of wings to the human form is considered an indication of divine or semi-divine status and supernatural travel – an ability to move freely between this world and the numinous. If this holds true also of Minoan Crete then we should see the birdwoman and winged man as supernatural entities, spirits, perhaps less in majesty than the fully-anthropomorphic Great Gods but more imaginative in form. There are not enough examples of winged men to speculate on their meaning beyond noting that it is a male spirit. In contrast, the birdwoman becomes the dominant winged paradigm of Minoan High Art. The many extant examples provide the opportunity to probe meaning as the images morph from the forms seen in the Early Seals into variants before disappearing so abruptly at the end of LM I. After identifying the wings as a spirit indicator, the femaleness of the birdwoman is the most important characteristic. This is clearly shown by her always wearing the woman's costume of flounced, frilled or fringed skirt or pants. It is also shown in the Zakros fantasy examples by her sometimes being endowed with very full breasts and spread legs as in 11.80 to 11.82. So, we are certainly dealing here with a female spirit. The other feature to provide information is the head. Now the head is always such an important and identifying feature and, in Minoan art, as human or faunal, has even been an *Icon* in its own right. Thus, one would expect that these birdwomen images signify different spirits when they depict different heads. When the birdwomen have bird or human heads, then they are truly half bird, half female human, and the name birdwoman is appropriate. But what about the many birdwomen with animal heads? It would seem that we have other spirit beings, also female in concept, which capture the essence of the animal or fantastic creature, if we have identified the different heads correctly. Then there are the examples where a warrior's tusk helmet substitutes for the head or is worn by an animate head as in 11.83 and 11.84. The tusk helmet is a symbol of warrior identity, something that has been stressed in other images. Does this female spirit represent warrior bravery and prowess, or is it calling for protection of the warrior in battle, or both? We cannot say for sure.

The content of these images links the birdwomen to the Bird Lady and Bird Mistress discussed in Chapter 12 on the Great Gods. Two birdwoman images are particularly informative about the interpretation of these birdwomen as being close to female deities. The dragon-headed birdwoman in 11.19 has two birdwomen servers shown in her image, just as the Great Lady has two women servers accompanying her. The antithetical group composition here can also be seen as presenting a Mistress of Animals motif as a Bird Mistress. The birdwoman who is seated on a stool in 11.20 assumes the pose of the Seated Lady, a pose reserved for female deities. The birdwoman group appears to represent female spirits, each with a specific sphere of interest. Elizabeth Barber, in her extended survey of the female spirit forces of old Europe, sees their power linked to fertility, moisture and the agricultural cycle¹¹. In folklore and in depiction, these spirits are known as young maidens, often with wings, always full of vibrant life which they express as they fly, swim or dance. They are known by different local names, *e.g.* willies or rusalki, but are all gathered by Barber under the title, "Dancing Goddesses". With their evocation of female power and sexuality, the birdwomen of the LM I seal images may well belong to this ancient spirit band.

So, have these female birdwomen spirits been there from the earliest times? Perhaps so, but we can only trace their existence from about MM II when they begin to appear in the seal record. Their burgeoning in Minoan High Art coincides with a time when important females were expansively depicted. The sudden and total disappearance of the birdwomen at the end of LM I raises the question of whether these spirits were no longer relevant to the Minoans or whether it was the presentation of

11 Barber 2013, particularly Chapter 1, the sections on fertility 196-200 and the Bronze Age Aegean 291-302.

their images that was not countenanced. Their absence does suggest that the climate of the Legacy Period in the Aegean was not amenable to the display of female sensitivity and power.

Animalmen in Somersault

Animalmen images come into the iconographic repertoire towards the end of Minoan High Art but they are not prevalent; their full floruit belongs to the Legacy Period. It is not surprising that the regular pose for these action beings is the somersault. We have seen acrobats tumbling from the early seals, with the somersault the main move in the bull sports arena. Such a characteristic male athletic exercise is thus the appropriate pose for the hybrid man spirit. The two animalmen known in Minoan High Art are the bullman and agrimiman. Their images gather the animal power of the agrimi and the bull and give it identity in the male human form. The agrimiman is linked to the wild forests through its animal form and thus also to the Great Gods, the Agrimi Lord and Agrimi Master, discussed in Chapter 12. The identity of the bullman is inextricably linked to that of the bull leaper. The bull as avatar of the Bull Lord was explained in the discussion of the bull sports in Chapter 9.

Frightful Faces

The frontal-faced being who makes a brief appearance in MM II has very peculiar features that suggest a specific role. The long tresses and earrings can belong to Minoan males but it is the buckteeth, eyes starting out of their sockets and spiked hair that are confronting. Frontal faces, particularly when they are ugly with exaggerated features, are employed across cultures both ancient and modern to signify evil intent. Is this what we have here? The examples where the eyes are without pupils as in 11.92 may indicate blindness or even the dead and, if the prominent teeth as in 11.58 and 11.59 are meant to signify indiscriminate gluttony, then we may have the monster that devours the corpse. We do not know, and must content ourselves with the characterising in art, for a brief time, of a malevolent force which might always have lurked in the Minoan collective mind.

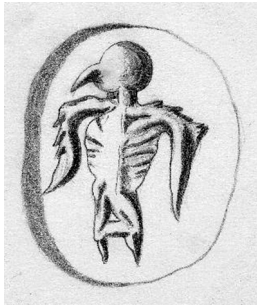
Comparisons with Images in Other Media

No comparisons are listed for the Lesser Spirits iconographic content.

Plates 11.1 to 11.108

Hybrid Women

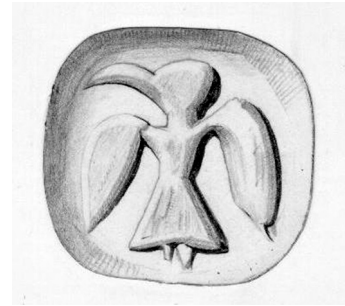
Hybrid Women – *Early Seal Period*



11.1 – birdwoman
(VIII 14/MM I-MM II)



11.2 – birdwoman
(II.2 243a/MM II)



11.3 – birdwoman
(II.2 264a/MM II)



11.4 – bird headed women
(II.5 323/MM II)



11.5 – animal headed women
(VI 34a/MM II)



11.6 – composite human
(II.2 127/MM II)

Hybrid Women – *Minoan High Art*



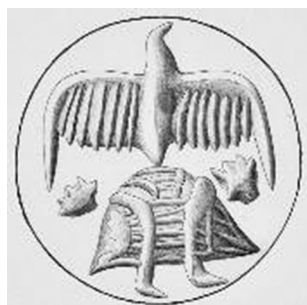
11.7 – birdwoman
(II.3 4/LM I)



11.8 – birdwoman
(XIII 3/)



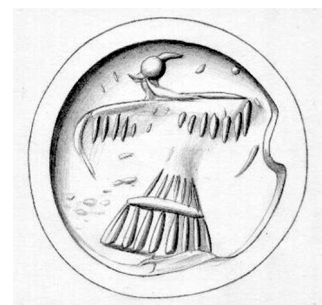
11.9 – birdwoman
(IV 290/LM I)



11.10 – birdwoman
(II.6 107/LM I)



11.11 – birdwoman
(III 367/LM I)



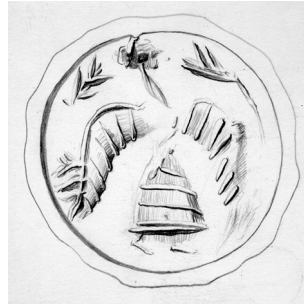
11.12 – birdwoman
(IX 165/LM I)

The Lesser Spirits

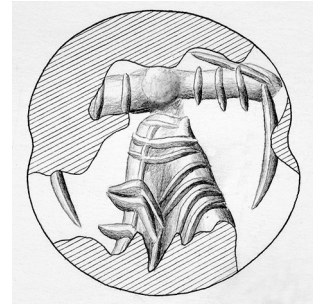
Hybrid Women – Minoan High Art (cont.)



11.13 – birdwoman
(III 364/LM I)



11.14 – birdwoman
(VII 141/LM I?)



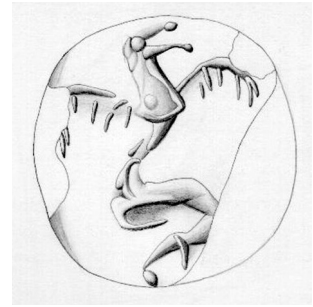
11.15 – birdwoman
(III 366/LM I)



11.16 – birdwoman
(XII 276b/LM I)



11.17 – birdwoman
(IS 98/LM?)



11.18 – birdwoman
(II.3 77/LM I)

Hybrid Women – Legacy Period



11.19 – birdwoman
(II.4 136/LM I-LM II)



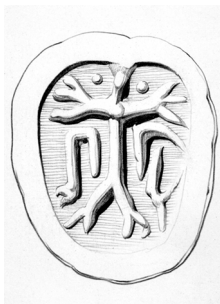
11.20 – birdwoman
(II.6 106/LM I)



11.21 – lionwoman
(XI 330/LB II-LB IIIA1)

Hybrid Men

Hybrid Men – Early Seal Period



11.22 – winged man
(II.1 453a/MM IB-MM II?)



11.23 – composite human
(IV 161/MM II)



11.24 – triskeles
(III 62/MM II)

The Lesser Spirits

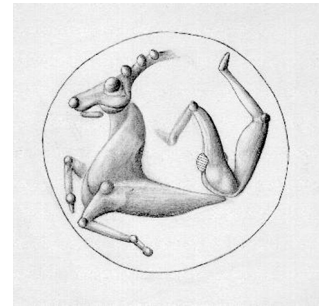
Hybrid Men – Minoan High Art



11.25 – winged man
(XIII 60/-)



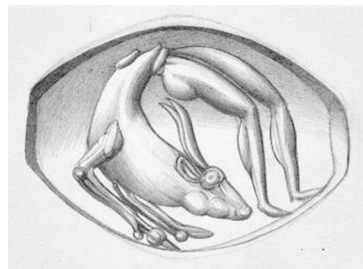
11.26 – geniusman
(II.8 201/LM I-LM II)



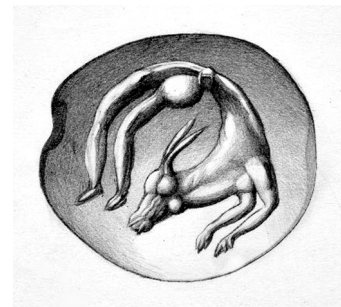
11.27 – agrimiman
(II.3 331/LB I)



11.28 – bullman
(XIII 34/-)



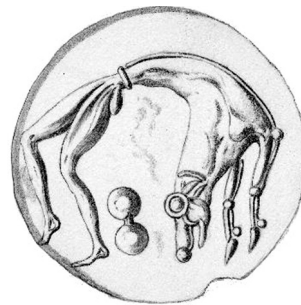
11.29 – bullman
(X 146/LM I-LM II)



11.30 – bullman
(X 232/LB I-LB II)



11.31 – bullman
(III 363/LM I-LM II)

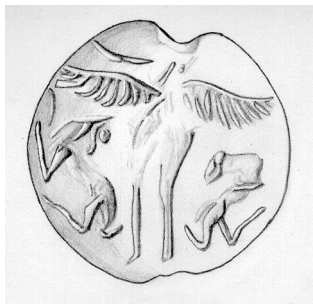


11.32 – bullman
(XII 238/LB I-LB II)



11.33 – bullman
(XII 245/LB I-LB II)

Hybrid Men – Legacy Period



11.34 – winged man
(VS1A 123/LM IIIA1?)



11.35 – geniusman
(VII 126/LB II-LB IIIA1)



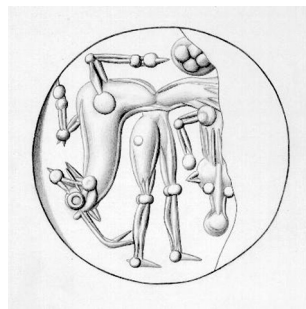
11.36 – lionman
(VS 1B 94/-)

The Lesser Spirits

Hybrid Men – Legacy Period (cont.)



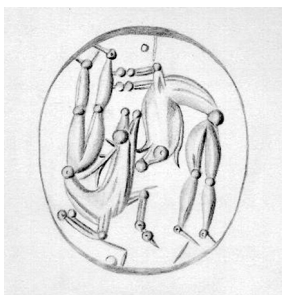
11.37 – lionman, agrimi
(I 77/LB II-LB IIIA1)



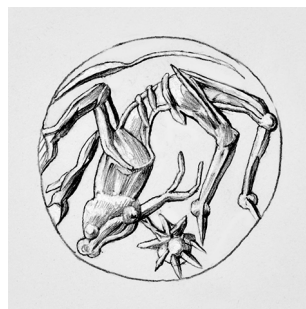
11.38 – lion-agrimiman
(II.3 332/LB IIIA1)



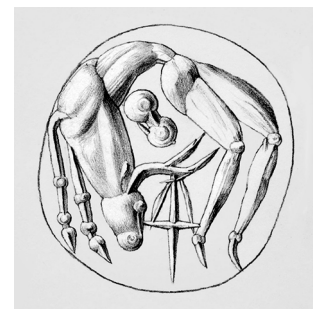
11.39 – lionman, bull
(X 142/LB II-LB IIIA1)



11.40 – lionman, stagman
(II.3 10/LB II-LB IIIA1)



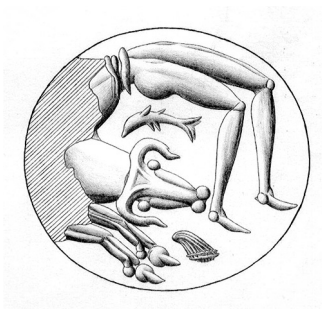
11.41 – bullman
(VI 299/LM II-LM IIIA1)



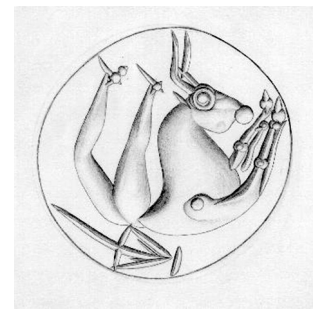
11.42 – bullman
(VI 298/LM II-LM IIIA1)



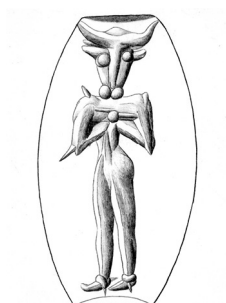
11.43 – bullman
(XI 251/LM II-LM IIIA1)



11.44 – bullman, dolphin
(VS2 112/LB II-LB IIIA1)



11.45 – bullman
(II.3 67/LB IIIA1)



11.46 – bullman
(VS3 154/LM II-LM IIIA1)



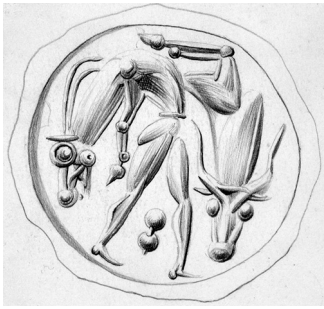
11.47 – bullman
(XII 242/LB II-LB IIIA1)



11.48 – bull-agrimiman
(XI 336/LB II-LB IIIA1)

The Lesser Spirits

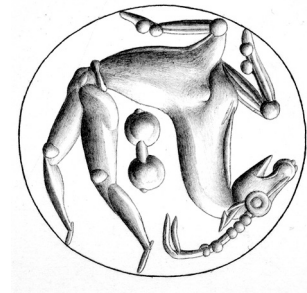
Hybrid Men – *Legacy Period (cont.)*



11.49 – bull-agrimiman
(VII 123/LB IIIA1-LB IIIA2)



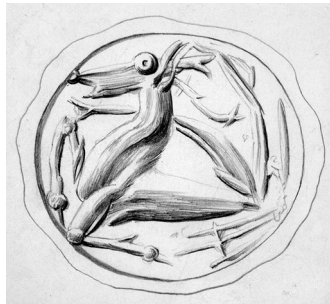
11.50 – agrimiman
(II.8 202/LM II-LM IIIA1)



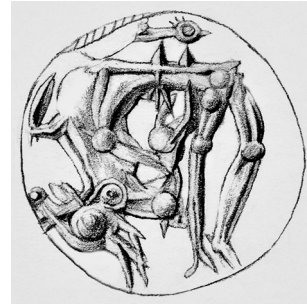
11.51 – agrimiman
(VS 3 113/LB II-LB IIIA1)



11.52 – agrimiman
(IX 128/LB II-LB IIIA1)



11.53 – stagman
(VII 138/LB II-LB IIIA1)



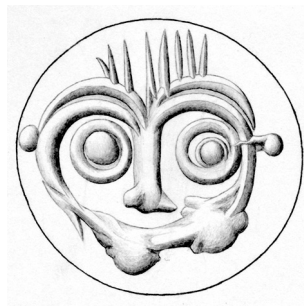
11.54 – stag-geniusman
(VI 303/LB II-LB IIIA1)

Frontal Faces

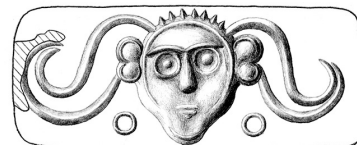
Frontal Faces – *Early Seal Period*



11.55 – frontal face
(II.2 251/MM II)



11.56 – frontal face
(III 105/MM II)



11.57 – frontal face
(III 237b/MM II)

Frontal Faces – *Minoan High Art*



11.58 – frontal face
(III 238a/MM II)



11.59 – frontal face
(VI 101a/MM II)



11.60 – frontal face
(I 467/LM I)

The Lesser Spirits

Frontal Faces – *Legacy Period*



11.61 – human head frontal
(V 431/LB)



11.62 – frontal face
(VS 1B 102/LB II-LB IIIA1)



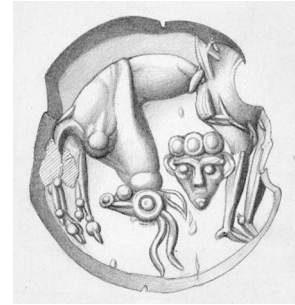
11.63 – frontal face
(II.8 220/LM II-LM IIIA1)



11.64 – frontal face
(II.8 217/LM II-LM IIIA1)



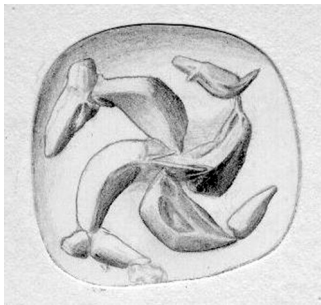
11.65 – frontal face
(II.3 115/LB IIIA1-LB IIIA2)



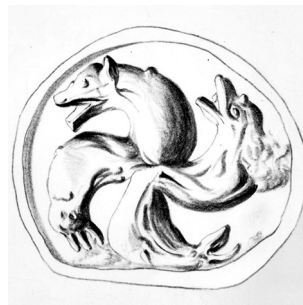
11.66 – frontal face
(X 145/LB II-LB IIIA1)

Varied Combinations

Varied Combinations – *Early Seal Period*



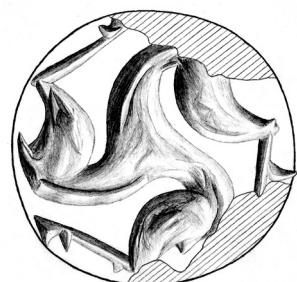
11.67 – animal head whirl
(II.2 235a/MM II)



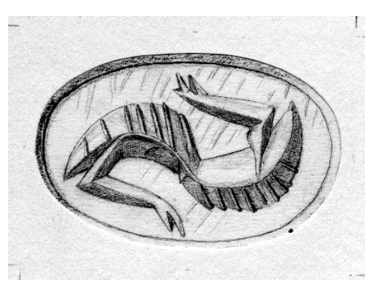
11.68 – animal head whirl
(VII 253a/MM II)



11.69 – animal head whirl
(II.8 35/MM II)



11.70 – animal parts
(VS 3 20/MM II)



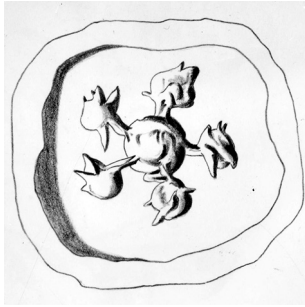
11.71 – bird parts
(II.2 104a/MM II)



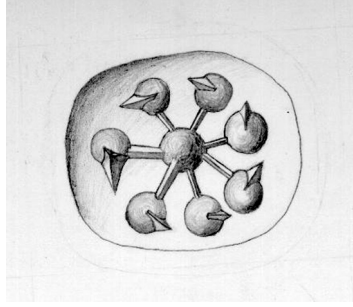
11.72 –bird parts
(IX 17d/MM II)

The Lesser Spirits

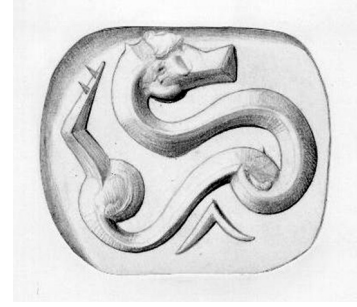
Varied Combinations – *Early Seal Period (cont.)*



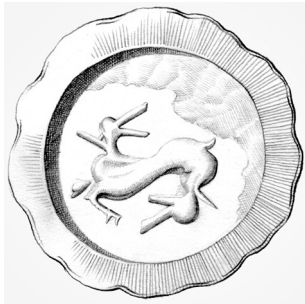
11.73 – bird heads
(VII 207c/MM II)



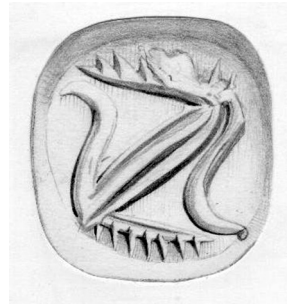
11.74 – bird heads
(II.2 295a/MM II)



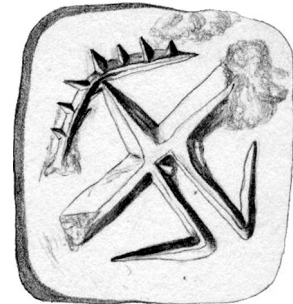
11.75 – composite animal
(II.2 299b/MM II)



11.76 – protomes conjoined
(I 424/MM II)



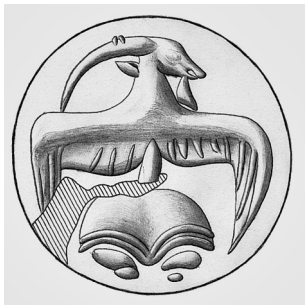
11.77 – inanimate shapes
(II.2 264c/MM II)



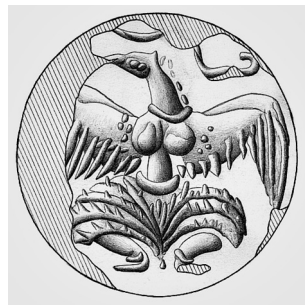
11.78 – inanimate shapes
(XII 29a/MM II)

Zakros Fantasy Images

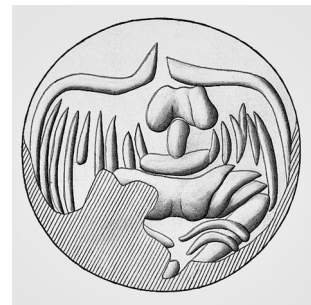
Zakros Fantasy Images: hybrid women – *Minoan High Art*



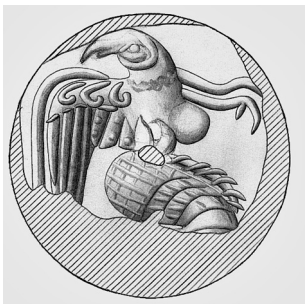
11.79 – birdwoman
(II.7 141/LM I)



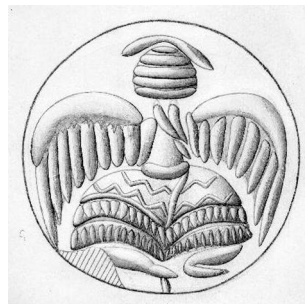
11.80 – birdwoman
(II.7 127/LM I)



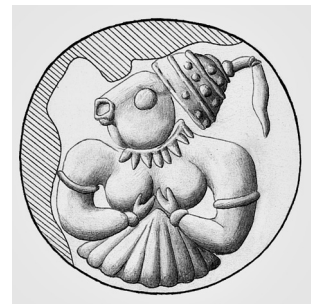
11.81 – birdwoman
(II.7 131/LM I)



11.82 – birdwoman
(II.7 126/LM I)



11.83 – birdwoman
(XII 174a/LM I)



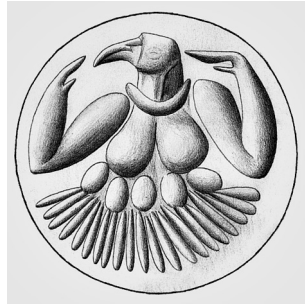
11.84 – composite human
(II.7 124/LM I)

The Lesser Spirits

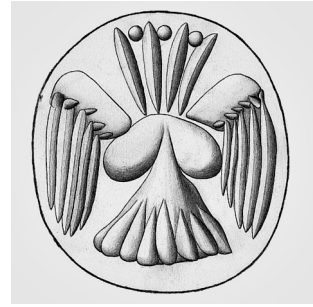
Zakros Fantasy Images: hybrid women – *Minoan High Art* (cont.)



11.85 – birdwoman
(II.7 145b/LM I)

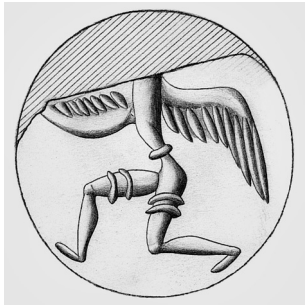


11.86 – woman's breasts, arms
(II.7 132/LM I)



11.87 – woman's breasts, wings
(II.7 135a/LM I)

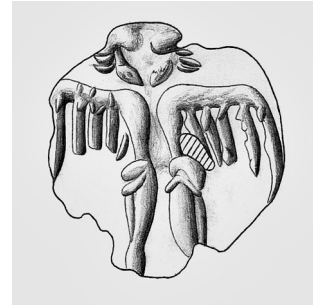
Zakros Fantasy Images: hybrid men – *Minoan High Art*



11.88 – winged man
(II.7 139a/LM I)



11.89 – winged man
(II.7 140/LM I)

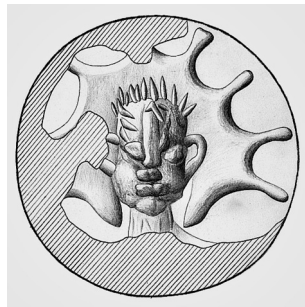


11.90 – winged men
(II.7 85/LM I)

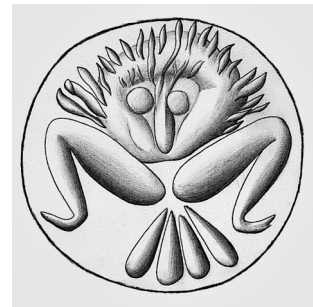
Zakros Fantasy Images: human parts plus – *Minoan High Art*



11.91 – frontal face
(II.7 118/LM I)



11.92 – frontal face
(II.7 122/LM I)



11.93 – frontal face, human legs
(II.7 119/LM I)



11.94 – human head
(II.7 83/LM I)



11.95 – human head
(II.7 121/LM I)



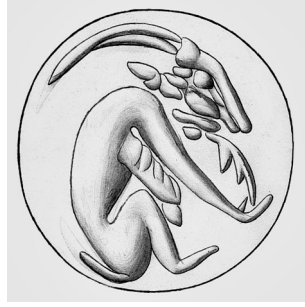
11.96 – human lower torso
(II.7 75/LM I)

The Lesser Spirits

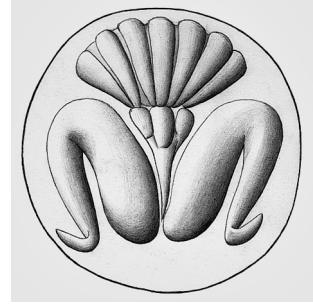
Zakros Fantasy Images: human parts plus – *Minoan High Art (cont.)*



11.97 – human arms
(II.7 170/LM I)

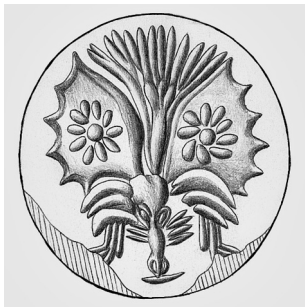


11.98 – woman's breasts, arms
(II.7 109a/LM I)

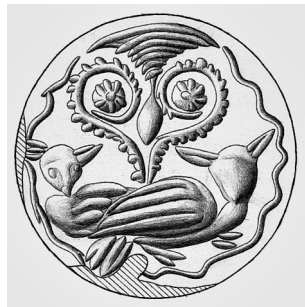


11.99 – human legs
(II.7 148/LM I)

Zakros Fantasy Images: animal parts plus – *Minoan High Art*



11.100 – boar/butterfly
(II.7 157/LM I)



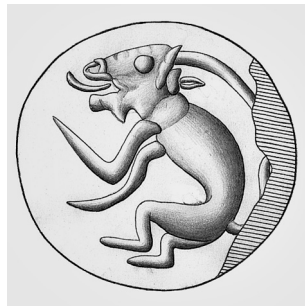
11.101 – bird/flora
(II.7 104b/LM I)



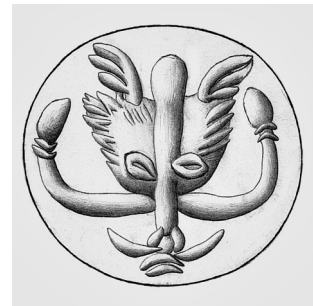
11.102 – boar/bird
(II.7 149/LM I)



11.103 – bird/animal legs
(II.7 161a/LM I)

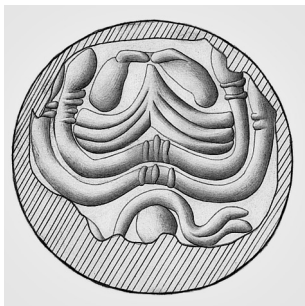


11.104 – bull/monkey?
(II.7 111/LM I)

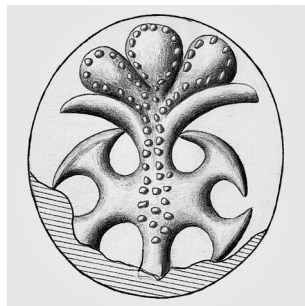


11.105 – boar/horn bow
(II.7 204/LM I)

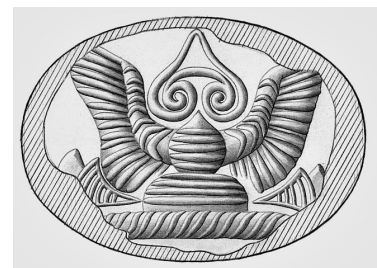
Zakros Fantasy Images: inanimate plus – *Minoan High Art*



11.106 – double horn bow
(II.7 186/LM I)



11.107 – various shapes
(II.7 207/LM I)



11.108 – various shapes
(II.7 211/LM I)

Chapter 12 The Great Gods

In this Chapter we return to the images containing human figures. In Chapter 9 we saw women and men going about their daily lives in peace and in war. However, we did not see a marked differentiation in apparel or headdress that could signify royalty as opposed to ordinary citizens, or might distinguish officiating religious personnel. Now, we have a parallel challenge. If we allow the possibility that the major Aegean deities were fully anthropomorphic, how can we differentiate them from ordinary mortals? This proves to be extremely difficult. There are no special robes, no obvious regalia or paraphernalia on show to state clearly which human figures are gods and what is their sphere of command. Oh, for the horned helmet of a Mesopotamian god or the animal head of an Egyptian deity! However, iconographic analysis of Minoan images can direct us to a group of figures which identify themselves by quite precise iconographic details¹. The term Very Important Person, or VIP for short, has been chosen as the name for this distinct group because it is a regularly used acronym which does not, of itself, identify the source of their importance as divine, royal or religious. The use of Lady for female VIPs and Lord for male VIPs similarly does not specify the source of their status. Thus, all three terms, VIP, Lady and Lord, are most useful terms as we try to identify the members of this special group at the Iconographic Description level. So, what are the iconographic details that set these personages apart from ordinary women and men and indicate that we have found our elusive deities?

Identifying Deities: The Five Criteria (Plates 12.1 to 12.20)

When compositions containing human figures are examined, the presence of a VIP Lady or VIP Lord is revealed by one or more of five iconographic criteria. Many VIPs so identified will, in fact, exhibit several of the criteria which regularly cluster in predictable ways. The five criteria are set out and explained below through twenty examples created within the developed iconography of Minoan High Art². One should note at this stage the consistency of the iconographic usage across the VIPs. The Ladies and Lords each has her/his own particular identity declared by the iconographic detail, and this usage is not transgressed by careless insertion of detail belonging to other VIPs.

1. *The Fantastic and the Supra-Normal*

Here VIPs hover in the air above other figures standing below as in 12.1, 12.5 and 12.7, clearly acting in a supra-normal way. Some VIPs have a wild animal as a tame pet, as with the lion in 12.2 and 12.20, and some are closely associated with fantastic creatures like the dragon and griffin as in 12.3 and

1 Search the IconAegean Database in the Icon Field on VIP accepting homage, VIP appearing on high, VIP carrying the catch, VIP driving the chariot, VIP full figure, VIP granting audience, VIP in the grand boat, VIP leading the prisoners, VIP with familiar and VIP with server. Search in the Element field on VIP, Lady, Lord, Great Lady, Seated Lady, Epiphany Lady, Staff Lady, Bow Lady, Sword Lady, Flower Lady, Sea Lady, Dragon Lady, Griffin Lady, Lion Lady, Agrimi Lady, Hound Lady, Bird Lady and Dolphin Lady in the Element field. Search on Mighty Lord, Epiphany Lord, Staff Lord, Bow Lord, Sword Lord, Griffin Lord, Lion Lord, Bull Lord, Agrimi Lord, Hound Lord, Dolphin Lord, Axe Lord, Mace Lord and Triple Bud Rod Lord.

Search the IconADict Database for the definition of each term or refer to IAS.

2 An earlier presentation on the criteria for identifying deities in Aegean seals was given at the Melbourne Aegaeum Conference and published in DAIS, 75-87, XI-XIV.

12.4. For exotic animals and fantastic creatures acting in these roles, the term, familiar, is used in the particular sense of naming the creature who both accompanies and identifies a specific personage. The *Icon* specifically developed to encapsulate this special relationship is termed VIP with familiar.

2. *Size Differential*

Here the VIPs are very much larger or very much smaller than other human figures in the same composition. They are larger than other figures as in 12.6, 12.7, 12.8, 12.9, 12.13 and 12.14. They are smaller than other figures as in 12.1, 12.5 and 12.15. The size differential is especially clear in the two compositions. The seated females are always larger than their servers while the hovering figures are always smaller than the other figures standing below them.

3. *Pose and Position*

The seated pose is notable for the Lady VIPs since only females may be seated in the developed iconography of Minoan High Art. The position where they are seated is carefully delineated with reference to both what they are seated upon and/or what rises up behind them. Ladies are seated on a shrine as in 12.9 and 12.13, on the rocky earth as in 12.6 and 12.7, with a grand pillar at their back as in 12.14, or in a grand boat with a shrine at their back as in 12.10. A VIP may strike a bold pose holding out a weapon in the power gesture, a staff as in 12.2, 12.11 and 12.15 or a bow as in 12.17. The VIP figure is given extra import when placed in a particular position, such as atop a city as in 12.11 or above a rocky mountain as in 12.15. The particular case of the artistic formula of the antithetical group stresses the central focus position of the Mistress and Master figures as in 12.12 and 12.15; these, too, must be considered VIPs.

4. *Centre of Attention*

Within a scene involving several human figure participants, the VIP is the centre of attention of the other figures. Either they are the focus of attention of servers who gesture before them as in 12.1, 12.5, 12.14, 12.15 and 12.16 or they are the focus of attention of servers who bring gifts to them as in 12.6, 12.9 and 12.13.

5. *Sole Subject*

Here the composition isolates the VIP from surrounding detail in the focus composition and, by placing the figure against a blank background, creates a commanding presence as in 12.2 and 12.17 to 12.20. To rule out the possibility that this sole subject may be an ordinary person, comparisons can be made with VIPs identified by other criteria. The Lady in 12.17 makes the same gesture with her bow³ as the Lady in 12.15 does with her staff. The Lady in 12.19 wears the same dress and featured neck scarf as the Lady in 12.8. Then there are the sole subjects within the VIP with familiar *Icon*. The Lords in 12.2 and 12.20 are identified by the wild lion familiar that they have at heel. The Lord in 12.18 is identified by the dolphin which is his familiar at his back. The dolphin is a known sea creature and not an exotic animal or fantastic creature but that does not affect its ability to act iconographically in the same role as a lion. Thus, all three male figures are identified as VIP Lords.

Can we be sure these VIPs are our missing deities, or are we mistaking the nature of their power? Could the Ladies and Lords after all be queens and kings? It seems not, as we have no corroborating iconographic detail for monarchical power. There are no crowns or thrones, no royal robes of differentiation from subjects. The Seated Lady does use a chair/shrine. So, perhaps she could be a queen on a “throne” because she is approached by servers and bearers of gifts in the VIP granting audience *Icon*. Alternatively, these details may proclaim her a deity, particularly since, in other images, she may be seated on other

3 The lady is not drawing her bow to release an arrow. There is no arrow and the positioning of the bow in relation to her legs indicates that she is not using it as a weapon. She is presenting her bow in the power gesture as befits her identity.

supports like the rocky ground. All the other iconographic detail indicates that the description of the “Missing Ruler” of the Aegean is an accurate observation as far as the seal images are concerned. Are these Ladies and Lords priestesses or priests? There are no images of any of them officiating at, or leading others in, a religious ritual. They do not hold any special vessels that could be used to pour libations. The genius is the figure that carries the ewer. In images of animal sacrifice, as in 6.181 to 6.192, 9.58 and 9.59, there are three examples where humans stand beside the sacrifice altar, and in one the human wears a plain tunic. If there are no regular depictions of persons’ performing clearly identifiable priestly roles wearing clearly identifiable priestly robes, it seems unlikely that priestly office, if indeed there even were priests or priestesses, would propel a personage to such an elevated level as the VIPs. So, if a royal or religious role will not encompass our group of VIP Ladies and Lords, are they truly, then, our deities? Have we found our Aegean goddesses and gods at last? Let us return to the five identification criteria for deities listed at the beginning of this Chapter. Consider the first criterion, that of the *Fantastic and the Supra-Normal*. Surely VIPs who arrive through the air to be greeted by human figures below have divine power. Surely VIPs who have fantastic creatures or wild animals as pet familiars are not made of mortal clay. Consider the next three criteria, *Size Differential*, *Pose and Position* and *Centre of Attention*. All three serve to distinguish VIPs from ordinary humans within the same image. Thus, these criteria are especially telling as an identification of divine status. Cross-referencing these figures with other images, particularly with those of the *Fantastic and the Supra-Normal*, leads us back to the deity identity. The *Sole Subject* criterion invokes the artistic judgement of just what is important enough to be given such concentrated focus. These figures are usually not involved in any activity but are just there, standing with great presence. Granting a human figure such a featured role argues for a status of prime importance and again, cross-referencing with the other criteria, confirms the deity identity. It seems we have indeed found our Aegean goddesses and gods!

Now there are two particular sub-groups within the larger VIP grouping that deserve further mention at this point. The *Icon* VIP with familiar addressed in the first criterion, *The Fantastic and the Supra-Normal*, shows a Lady or Lord interacting with their animal familiar. The classic pose is where the VIP stands with familiar at heel like a pet. The VIP may hold it on a leash or just control it by touch as in 12.2. The Lady may ride her dragon as in 12.3 or the Lord drive his griffin chariot as in 12.4. The familiar may be a fantastic creature, an exotic animal or an indigenous animal, but the iconographic formula gathers them and unites them in meaning. It is not possible to extract the figures with indigenous animals like the hound and the agrimi and say that these are humans but allow that the figures with fantastic creatures and exotic wild animals are deities. Iconographic rules do not work like that. Think of the iconography of the halo in Christian art. The use of the halo signifies a saint. Even if the figures graced with a halo may look very different we are not at liberty to, say, remove all the ones looking shabby and keep the ones that are richly dressed. The iconography decrees that all are saints. So too, the iconography of the VIP with familiar reveals the divine identity of all these human figures although, alas, we do not have contemporary records that would inform us further, as is the case with the halo iconography example. The other distinct grouping is the Mistress/Master of Animals *Icon* addressed in the third criterion, *Pose and Position*. Here the iconographic antithetical group formula declares the importance of the central human figure and confers deity status, female or male⁴.

Once all the VIP deities are selected from the images according to the five criteria listed above we may ascribe their Iconographic Description, beginning with bestowing a name on each of the Ladies and Lords depicted. It is clear that there are some very clear distinguishing features which can provide convenient names devoid of interpretation. Their use is illustrated across Plates 12.21 to 12.212. VIPs may be differentiated by what they do and this activity will name them. The large female VIP who is always seated in a special place may be called the Seated Lady. The small female and male VIPs who hover above human figures below may be called the Epiphany Lady and the Epiphany Lord. The Lady

4 For more on the Master figures see Crowley 2010b, 79-91.

who travels across the sea in the grand boat may be called the Sea Lady. VIPs may be differentiated by their personal appearance. Remember that we cannot describe the VIPs by the clothes that they wear because these are the same as mortal human beings wear in other depictions. A name needs to be found for the Lady of great size and voluptuous body who has women servers: Great Lady seems an appropriate choice. The male VIP of powerful physique, often depicted by himself making the chest gesture, needs a name like Mighty Lord. What the VIPs carry may be seen as their insignia and this would give a name to their identity. Thus, the Staff Lady and Staff Lord hold the staff (or spear), the Bow Lady and Bow Lord carry the bow, the Sword Lady and Sword Lord brandish the sword and the Flower Lady is plucking or smelling her flower. Also holding their insignia are the Axe Lord, the Mace Lord and the Triple Bud Rod Lord. VIPs may be differentiated by their animal companion, their familiar, and thus be named. The Dragon Lady rides her dragon side-saddle. The Griffin Lady flies along with or cuddles her griffin while the Griffin Lord holds his griffin familiar or has griffins pull his chariot. The Lion Lady and Lion Lord treat their lion familiar like a pet, reaching out to it or holding it on a leash. The same is true of the Hound Lady and Hound Lord and the Bull Lord. The Agrimi Lady holds or feeds her agrimi while the Agrimi Lord holds his agrimi familiar. The Bird Lady is carried along by two of her familiars or holds one in her arms. A dolphin familiar leaps down beside the Dolphin Lady and behind the Dolphin Lord. This identification by the accompanying familiar is one of the most telling and reliable descriptions and secures a large grouping of VIPs. Running parallel to these VIPs with familiar are the Mistress and Master of Animals figures. This particular artistic formula, the antithetical group rendering of human figure flanked by animals, indicates that these figures are of deity status. The flanking animals as attendants name the central figure. Thus we have Griffin, Lion, Bull, Hound, Agrimi, Bird and Dolphin Mistresses and Masters. There is also a Bird Mistress, a Ram Mistress and a Stag Master.

Of course, we wish that we had the Minoan and Mycenaean names for each of these divinities. However, due to the Aegean silence, these names are not available. So, we must create the next best nomenclature in order for us to discuss the roles of these deities in Aegean art and life. That next best nomenclature must surely be purely descriptive titles so as to avoid moving at once into interpretation, a point increasingly being recognised in recent moves in art discussions. One example is to use the term “Enthroned Female” for the large seated female figure seen in the crocus gathering fresco from Thera and on the ivory pyxis from Mochlos. Yet, when these two female figures are compared with large seated female figures on LM I seal images, it is clear that there is never a throne *per se*. Sometimes she is seated on a shrine or on a stepped platform like a tiered shrine or on a cushion and sometimes on a stone/boulder or rocky ground. Thus, a more inclusive description seems in order. Here she is simply named the Seated Lady, a title which allows the variation of what she is seated upon to be further explained, that explanation providing further insights into the Lady’s nature. The seal images provide the widest range of deity depictions and thus the opportunity to develop the required descriptive nomenclature. Accordingly, the names set out in the IconAegean Vocabulary and used here provide full coverage but allow discussion with nuance and accuracy. While there is some reticence on the part of Aegean scholars to adopt any such deity nomenclature, it seems to me to be impossible to avoid if we are to have any facility in discussing deity identity and roles. We cannot afford to wait until we do discover all the original Minoan and Mycenaean names because that may not happen. Then, even if the names do come to be discovered and translated, that will still not solve the problem unless the names occur in contexts that describe each deity and thus provide details which can be cross-referenced to identify the deity in the images. If such discoveries, translations and cross-referencing ever eventuate then, with great alacrity, we can begin to use the original Bronze Age Aegean names.

Presenting the Ladies and Mistresses (Plates 12.21 to 12.128)

VIP Ladies

VIP Ladies – *Early Seal Period* (Plates 12.21 to 12.31)

There are some very early sole subject images suggesting a Lady figure when comparing the detail of later images. The seated figure with upraised arms in 12.21 could be an early Seated Lady⁵. The female figure in 12.22 with a particular hairstyle and a scarf and accompanied by a lion could be our first Lion Lady as Seated Lady. The fluid shape in 12.23 represents a standing or reclining (rotating the seal 90° to the left) female in long pants, likely a Lady. By the end of MM II there are distinct female figures shown with rounded buttocks and the hem line of long pants, sitting on a carefully shaped chair or stool as in 12.24 to 12.26. These are clear Seated Ladies showing details that will remain standard for later depictions. In 12.24 a peak at the back of the neck is defined, as also in 12.26, if that figure is fully in profile. The figures in 12.27 to 12.29 also have a clearly defined chair or seat. The body shape in 12.27 shows a clothed figure, which at first glance looks similar to the cloaked males in contemporary seals but, allowing that the figure is seated on a special stool with a tree behind (possibly a palm tree), then it is more likely to be a Lady wearing a mantle. In 12.28 there is a figure behind the Seated Lady. This figure may be a server, meaning that the Great Lady iconography is already present. In 12.29 the Seated Lady has arms upraised in an early hands high gesture, as also in 12.21, 12.25 and 12.32. Of considerable interest is the Seated Lady in 12.30 because her seat is a boulder. Furthermore, she has a scarf trailing beside her, much as the Lion Lady in 12.22. The standing female figure in 12.31 has the long patterned skirt and girdle ties with pompom ends which link her to later Lady images. It is unfortunate that the symbol placed above her is broken away, thus preventing sure identification.

VIP Ladies – *Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art* (Plates 12.32 to 12.86)

Great Lady, Seated Lady

In this Period the Great Lady is shown standing or as the Seated Lady either in sole subject compositions or attended by her women servers. She is seated welcoming servers in the VIP granting audience *Icon* as in 12.33 to 12.38. There may be one server or two, all being women except for the monkey in 12.34, and they may bring gifts to the Lady. The Lady's seat may be a constructed shrine as in 12.33, 12.37 and 12.47, with a grand pillar placed behind as in 12.34, or boulders or rocky ground as in 12.36, 12.38 and 12.45 or with a tree placed behind as in 12.35. She may be seated on a stool as in 12.39, 12.42 and 12.46 or on a pile of cushions as in 12.43. The Great Lady may also be shown with her servers ministering to her. She is shown standing with her servers beside her in 12.40 and 12.41 while in 12.39 and 12.42 she is seated and they are standing. The women servers are sometimes shown as two smaller replicas of the Lady herself as in 12.40 and 12.41. The sole subject depictions of 12.43 and 12.44 show the Lady seated on a specially shaped triple cushion and the standing Lady wearing a scarf at the neck with characteristic neck roll and flying ends similar to those in 12.40 and 12.41. A special case seems to apply to those images where a male figure stands before the Great Seated Lady as in 12.45 to 12.47. She is immediately recognisable because of her large size and being seated on rocky ground, on a stool placed before stylised rocks or a constructed shrine. The male, although smaller, is still a strong figure as he reaches out confidently to her in 12.45, or gives the pointing gesture in 12.46 and 12.47. The fact that their arms are in contact in 12.46 suggests that he, too, is a deity and, as the Mighty Lord, he is discussed below. For clothing, both the Great Lady and the Seated Lady may wear a frilled or flounced skirt but the favoured costuming for the Seated Lady is long pants.

⁵ The plait in the drawing is shown attached to the head but this connection is not clear in the seal or the impression. Contrast 12.29 where the plait is clearly attached to the head as part of the hairstyle.

Epiphany Lady

The small figures placed above men and women who gesture to them are identified as epiphany figures in the air as in 12.48 to 12.53. It is not clear in 12.53 whether the Lady is actually in the air or alighting on the rocky mountain because of the lacuna, but artistic duality would have her as both Epiphany Lady and Mistress of Animals. When detail is sufficient, their hair is shown blowing back as if they are rushing through the air to arrive before the worshipping human and their feet are poised like ballerinas *en pointe*, thus leading to the naming of the *Icon* as VIP appearing on high. They wear the frilled skirt except in the special case of 12.45 where the figure is seated and wearing long pants.

Staff Lady, Bow Lady, Sword Lady

An interesting group of Ladies shows them bearing the weapons which give them their names as in 12.54 to 12.60. The staff or spear (sometimes the differentiating detail of the point is not clear) is held out in the power gesture in 12.53 and 12.54. It is brandished along with a sword (dagger) in 12.55 while a grand spear stands upright behind the Lady in 12.56. A Lady holds out the bow in the power gesture in 12.57 while a bow is seen behind the Lady in 12.58. In 12.59 a Lady carries her bow over her shoulder as a carrying pole and from it a shape like a folded flounced skirt is suspended. In 12.60 a Lady brandishes her sword above her head as also in 12.55 and, in both these examples, the Lady wears the fleecy skirt. The Staff and Sword Ladies wear a side-pleated, frilled, fringed or fleecy skirt while the Bow Lady favours long pants.

Flower Lady

The Lady in 12.32 may be our first Flower Lady. She wears a skirt and stands giving the hands high gesture surrounded by oval shapes, possibly meant to be flowers. Later sole subject depictions of the Flower Lady show her with a variety of flowers as in 12.61 to 12.65. She holds a papyrus flower in 12.61 with another behind her and an open crocus is placed behind her in 12.62. In 12.63 to 12.65 she is surrounded by stylised flower forms. She reaches out to pick an opening flower, or stands between tree and triple bud or holds a garland around her head and body. The Flower Lady wears a frilled, flounced or fringed skirt.

Sea Lady

The association with the sea is celebrated in 12.66 to 12.70. In the first four images the Sea Lady is shown in her grand boat. This water craft has a curved hull and is distinguished by triple bud prow and dragon or griffin head stern as in 12.66, 12.67 and 12.69. The prow/stern is barely elaborated in 12.68 but this grand boat does carry a shrine as also is the case in 12.66 and 12.69. The Sea Lady is either simply carried along in her boat gesturing or else she propels her craft with oar or pole. The surface of the sea is shown as an extended tricurved arch pattern in 12.69 and it would seem sensible to see the background in 12.70 as the same patterned sea surface. This reading would identify the figure in 12.70 as the Sea Lady resting fully in her own element⁶. Where the clothing of the Sea Lady is clear she wears either a flounced skirt or long pants.

Dragon Lady, Griffin Lady, Lion Lady

These images see the Ladies as closely connected to fantastic or exotic creatures whom we term their familiars as in 12.71 to 12.77. All are depicted in the VIP with familiar *Icon*. The Dragon Lady in 12.71 and 12.72 rides her dragon familiar side-saddle, as befitting the female sex. The Griffin Lady flies through the air with her winged familiar in 12.73 or seems to embrace it as it rears up to her in 12.74. In

6 Not all Aegeanists see 12.70 as a figure reclining on the sea surface. CMS published the sealing with the figure standing upright. However, the pose is natural for a reclining/sleeping figure but not a standing one. It is possible that the tricurved arch pattern could be depicting an elaborate cloth but it seems reasonable to see it here as the sea surface which it regularly represents.

12.58 the Lion Lady reaches out to control her familiar. In 12.75 and 12.76 the Lion Lady acts with her familiar as an owner with her pet, scratching it under the chin or holding it on a collared leash. In 12.77 she rides her lion familiar side-saddle, as expected. In these images the Lady wears a frilled, flounced, fringed or fleecy skirt or long pants.

Agrimi Lady, Hound Lady, Bird Lady, Dolphin Lady

There is a series of images where the Lady interacts with familiars that are drawn from indigenous fauna as in 12.78 to 12.86. These, too, are depicted in the VIP with familiar *Icon*. The agrimi is a favourite with the Lady either feeding it or holding it by its remarkable horns as in 12.78 to 12.82. In 12.78 and 12.79 the Lady is also shown seated. The Hound Lady in 12.83 holds her familiar on a collared leash just like a pet. The hound itself is of mastiff shape and huge size and turns its head expectantly to its mistress. The Bird Lady in 12.84 is carried aloft by two of her familiars, their elevated wings and outspread tails providing a seat for her as Seated Lady. In 12.54 a similar pair of birds with elevated wings supports a standing Staff Lady. In 12.85 the Bird Lady holds her familiar in her arms as the bird turns its head to look at her. In 12.86 the Dolphin Lady gestures to her familiar as it leaps down in characteristic pose before her. In these images the Lady wears a frilled, flounced or fringed skirt or long pants.

VIP Ladies – Legacy Period (Plates 12.87 to 12.98)

Some of the Lady representations are continued into the Legacy Period. In 12.87 and 12.88 the VIP granting audience *Icon* is again used. The Great Lady as Seated Lady receives genius servers approaching bearing gifts of ewers. She wears a long patterned gown and holds a chalice up in the toasting gesture. In 12.88 she is approached by women servers and an even smaller male figure. The standing Great Lady in 12.89 has her two servers each side gesturing to her. The Dragon Lady appears once in 12.90, again riding her familiar side-saddle. The Griffin Lady relates to her familiar as a cherished pet in 12.91 and 12.92. As Seated Lady she holds a docile female griffin on an elaborate collared leash and then, standing, as her griffin rears up to her and turns its head to her, she wraps her arm round it to cuddle it close. In 12.93 The Griffin Lady gestures to her familiar facing her. The Agrimi Lady, too, makes an appearance as in 12.96 to 12.98, using the same artistic formula of gesturing to the quiet familiar standing before her. In 12.94 a Bird Lady is shown within a building with her familiars perched on columns each side of the entrance. The disintegrating image in 12.95 may also be a Bird Lady.

VIP Mistress of Animals

VIP Mistress of Animals – Minoan High Art (Plates 12.99 to 12.113)

In Minoan High Art the use of the antithetical group formula to depict the Mistress of Animals becomes popular. The Mistress is placed centrally, usually standing in the combination pose, with her attendant animals flanking her. Various heraldic poses are used for the animals who mostly face her although they can be addorsed.

Griffin Mistress, Lion Mistress, Hound Mistress

The Griffin Mistress is attended by her griffins either statant or rampant as in 12.99 to 12.101. Their wings are elevated with the expected curls along the wing bone and they may be crested. The Lion Mistress is seen in 12.102 to 12.106. Her lion attendants may pose statant or rampant facing her as in 12.102, 12.104 and 12.105. They may be addorsed, seen couchant on the perimeter groundline in 12.103 and as protomes in 12.106. The lions usually have large manes. In 12.102 they are shown as a pair, a male and a female with dugs although both have manes. The Mistresses stand in combination pose except for 12.100 which may be frontal and 12.104 where she is seated in combination pose on a bench or sacrifice altar like a Seated Lady. The Mistresses wear flounced or fringed skirts or long pants. They regularly wear the horn bow headdress as in 12.99 and 12.100. In 12.101 the Mistress wears a neck roll scarf with flying ends. In 12.107 the Mistress wears a long mantle and sits on a lion head,

thus exhibiting duality with the Seated Lady. We have here a Lion Hound Mistress since her attendants are carefully delineated as lion and hound, particularly with respect to body mass, head shape and tail ending.

Bird Mistress, Dolphin Mistress

The Bird Mistresses in 12.108 to 12.111 stand in combination pose with their attendants usually addorsed. The bird wings may be close or displayed in which case they fill out the circle of the seal face shape. In 12.108 the Bird Mistress stands on a waveline. In 12.112 and 12.113 the Dolphin Mistress stands in combination/frontal pose with arms raised while her dolphins leap down in characteristic pose on each side. The Bird and Dolphin Mistresses wear flounced or fringed skirts.

VIP Mistress of Animals – *Legacy Period* (Plates 12.114 to 12.120)

Some Mistress figures continue into the Legacy Period. In 12.114 and 12.115 the Griffin Mistress is depicted in the same artistic formula as in the earlier Period with respect to her pose, the griffin's pose and the horn bow headdress. The Lion Lady is seen in 12.116 in the antithetical group variant where the animal is centred and the Mistress doubled to stand each side, this time in profile pose. A new Mistress, a Bull Mistress, is seen in 12.117. Although the image lacks the lower half it is clear that the Mistress wears the horn bow hat and holds arms high to the bull attendants that face her. The addition of attendant genius figures, which usually attend male deities, completes the one only image. A Mistress figure wearing the horn bow hat is depicted in 12.118 but the animal attendants are mostly missing. The one head that remains does look like an agrimi and so the name Agrimi Mistress is appropriate. The Hound Mistress in 12.119 is clearer, with the hound head matching those of earlier mastiffs. In 12.120 the Dolphin Mistress, complete with triton headdress, is accompanied by her dolphins, one leaping up and one leaping down.

VIP Mistress with Animal – *Minoan High Art* (Plates 12.121 to 12.127), *Legacy Period* (Plate 128)

This group of images shows a Mistress with only one attendant animal, an agrimi or a ram, which rears up addorsed but leans its upper body across her, even to placing its head on her shoulder. The female figures so featured are close to the Mistress figures since they use the familiar Mistress details except that only one animal attendant is shown. Possibly the need to achieve clarity has pressured the artist to reduce the two attendants to one and then to overlap them with the Mistress figure. The animal shape in these images belongs to either an agrimi or a ram but the animal may not be clearly identified when it is the young of the species as in 12.121 to 12.123 and 12.127 and thus lacks the distinctive horns as with the familiars of the Agrimi Ladies in 12.78 to 12.82. The Ram Mistresses in 12.124 to 12.126 are clear as the horns frame the ram head in their distinctive curve. The Ram Mistress appears to be a variant of the Agrimi Mistress because of its identical treatment and because there is no equivalent ram attendant in the VIP with familiar *Icon*. These Mistresses usually stand profile and wear the flounced, frilled or fringed skirt. The Mistress in 12.125 wears a neck roll scarf with the long ends hanging down her back. One final example takes us into the Legacy Period. The detailed depiction in 12.128 shows a Ram Mistress and server, each wearing an elaborate flounced skirt and coiffure/headdress. It is the last of these Mistress with Animal images as they do not appear to continue within the Legacy Period.

Presenting the Lords and Masters (Plates 12.129 to 12.218)

VIP Lords

VIP Lords – *Early Seal Period* (Plates 12.129 to 12.131)

There are some very early male sole subject images that pose the figure with significant details. In 12.129 the figure wears a brimmed hat and holds a sword. He stands astride a boulder shape and beneath what may be the earliest depiction of an orb rod. In 12.130 the male figure wears a diagonal chest strap and

stands giving the hands high gesture with a triple bud rod above. The strong male figure in 12.131 wears clearly delineated chest clothing. He also stands giving the hands high gesture although the surrounding items are not clear enough to declare his particular identity. These figures are different from the many working men depicted in MM II as potters, porters and musicians, all of whom are linked to the tools of their trade. These early figures may provisionally be identified as the Sword Lord, Triple Bud Rod Lord and a VIP Lord.

VIP Lords – *Minoan High Art* (Plates 12.132 to 12.173)

Minoan High Art provides a plethora of male images which exhibit one or more of the criteria for identifying VIPs. While there are some scenes of interaction with other human figures, for the most part the VIPs are positioned as sole subjects with identification through their pose, by something they hold or by the animal familiar that accompanies them.

Mighty Lord

This Lord is pictured as a muscled young man in the regular Minoan male dress of belt and kilt as in 12.132 to 12.137. The characteristic pose is standing with both arms bent to the chest in the chest gesture as in 12.133. Where one arm is occupied holding something like a staff or spear then the free arm is bent to the chest as in 12.132 and 12.136 and most likely also in 12.137. The Mighty Lord is also shown in the presence of the Seated Lady to whom he reaches out his hand, as discussed above under 12.45 to 12.47 and seen again here in 12.135.

Epiphany Lord

The small male figure shown above larger human figures who greet him is the Epiphany Lord as in 12.133, 12.134 and 12.141. His particular identity in any one image is revealed by his chest gesture or by his carrying the staff or bow and sword.

Staff Lord, Bow Lord, Sword Lord, Axe Lord, Mace Lord

This grouping of male VIP figures sees each carrying a weapon. In 12.138 the Staff Lord stands proudly holding out his staff which presumably rests on the ground. He is dressed in a long kilt, wears a tasselled hat and is accompanied by his lion familiar. Compare his pose with that of the Lord in 12.132 and in 12.134. All three hold their staffs out in the power gesture. In 12.136 and 12.137 the Lord stands quietly, his staff planted by his side. In 12.139 and 12.140 the Lord is in action, striding forward with his staff or holding his staff at the ready as he checks his hound familiar. In 12.141 it is the Epiphany Lord who is also shown as the Bow Lord and Sword Lord as he brandishes a strung bow in one hand and a sword/dagger in the other. In 12.143 the Lord kneels to draw his bow, in this case a simple bow. At other times it is a composite bow with its distinctive incurve at the grip. Usually the bow is shown in its normal state of being un-strung. It is clearly seen in 12.142 where the Bow Lord holds his bow down as he stands beside his lion familiar. Understanding the shape of the composite bow allows identification of the shape behind the male figures in 12.144 to 12.146. It is the unstrung composite bow. In 12.147 the Sword Lord brandishes his weapon while he holds his lion familiar on a leash. In all these examples the Lord wears the belt and kilt or sometimes a longer kilt. For the Mace Lord of 12.150 and 12.173 the clothing is the diagonal robe while the mace is solid like a hammer. The Axe Lord depicted in 12.148 on a seal from Vathia, in 12.149 on a seal from Vaphio and on a seal from Pylos⁷ also wears the diagonal robe while his axe has a single curved blade fixed to the haft at each end of the curve. Arthur Evans identified the Vaphio figure as carrying a fenestrated axe known from Middle Bronze Age Syria. He

7 I thank Sharon Stocker and Jack Davis for drawing my attention to the rock crystal seal from the Griffin Warrior Grave at Pylos. A preliminary illustration is provided, Davis 2022, Figure 38.

further identified the clothing worn by the figure as priestly robes also emanating from Syria⁸. He was influenced by the finds in the Vaphio burial of the deceased wearing the gem and just such a fenestrated axe found among the many rich grave goods. However, the iconographic detail does not support the identification of the axe depicted on each of the three seals as the fenestrated axe. The Syrian axe is fixed to the haft substantially at three points by the three flanges cast in the axe head which produce the two looping fenestrations between. The Minoan examples are quite different in that the curved blade is fixed only at the extremities of the curve, leaving a clear space below the haft which features a central boss. As this boss is not connected to the axe blade, there is no evidence of a tripartite fixing as for the fenestrated axe. The omission of the most characteristic features of the fenestrated axe calls into question Evans' original identification. The Minoan weapon has quite a different shape but one that was without doubt intended by the seal artists who could manage to include any detail that they wished in their Minoan High Art creations. Excavation has provided evidence of fenestrated axes being brought into the Aegean area⁹ but the iconographic detail does not record their presence. It is now necessary to reassess the many arguments that have been based on seeing the axes held by VIPs in LM I seal images as identical to the Syrian fenestrated axes.

Triple Bud Rod Lord

The Triple Bud Rod Lord in 12.151 and 12.152 wears the belt and kilt and in 12.151 the brimmed hat also. In 12.151 he leads two women bound by cords as he holds a rod with a triple bud finial, the whole scene enacted below a hovering triple bud rod symbol. In 12.151 he holds a triple bud and stands in a flower field formed by triple buds while holding a monkey on a leash.

Griffin Lord, Lion Lord

In this grouping all Lords are depicted in the VIP with familiar *Icon*, with the familiars being fantastic or exotic beasts. The Griffin Lord is seen in focus syntax standing beside his huge griffin familiar in 12.153 and 12.154. In each case he holds his familiar on a leash, with the collar in 12.153 tied in a beautiful bow! A muscular griffin leaps up to its master in 12.155. The Griffin Lord drives his chariot in 12.156 pulled by two griffins leaping along in the flying gallop. He carries an adult griffin over his shoulder in 12.157 and a young griffin in his arms in 12.158. The Lion Lord is also shown in the classic focus composition of standing beside his familiar. In 12.159 to 12.163 the Lion Lord places his arm lovingly around his lion's neck and into its mane as it stands obediently beside its master. In 12.159, 12.162 and 12.163 the lion turns its head to look adoringly at its Lord and in 12.163 even takes up the fawning position of a favourite hound. Then in 12.164 the Lion Lord drives his chariot pulled by his two lion familiars. In 12.138, 12.142, 12.144 and 12.147, the Lion Lord, identified by his familiar, is also presented as Staff, Bow or Sword Lord. The dress of the Griffin and Lion Lords is regularly the belt and kilt, sometimes a longer kilt and, in the case of the Griffin Lord in 12.153, a diagonal robe.

Bull Lord, Agrimi Lord, Hound Lord, Bird? Lord, Dolphin Lord

The same VIP with familiar *Icon* is used to depict Lords whose familiar belongs to this everyday world. The Bull Lord in 12.165 to 12.168 stands beside a huge bull which he either holds on a leash or controls by stretching his arm over it. The Agrimi Lord is seen in 12.169 in the expected focus composition. The Hound Lord is a popular image. In 12.170 the Lord is armed with spear and shield with hound at heel while in 12.171 he leans back as his absolutely huge hound turns its head to him. We have already

8 Evans PM IV, 412-414. On priests, see below Chapter 13, Ceremony and Meeting the Great Gods.

9 See Aruz CMS B7 175-176; Yasur-Landau 2015, 139-150; Maran 2015, 243-270. Assaf Yasur-Landau explores the travels of fenestrated axes from the Levant to the Aegean accepting the definition of Miron, "... a fenestrated ax is defined ... as a socketed ax with two equal-sized openings, or fenestrations, on its blade ..." and gives a summary of the typology including the eye axes, "transition" and duckbill axes. Joseph Maran continues the investigation of the axes and includes a discussion on the Vaphio axe as an entangled object.

seen the Hound Lord armed with staff or bow in 12.140 and 12.146. The animal familiar in 12.144 could be hound or lion, a perennial problem of identification for Minoan iconography, but most likely here we have a mastiff of molossian shape. The Dolphin Lord in 12.173 is identified by his beautifully sculpted familiar leaping down in characteristic pose behind him. We have met him before as the Mace Lord carrying his hammer-like mace in 12.150. The Lords are usually clothed in the belt and kilt but the Dolphin, Mace and Axe Lords wear the diagonal robe. Also wearing the diagonal robe is the figure in 12.172. Now, a male figure with a bird, composed in the *Icon* of VIP with familiar, would be expected to be termed a Bird Lord. However, it is a one only depiction and the association of male identity with bird breaks all the iconographic rules which consistently associate birds with the female in Minoan idiom. In raising a question mark over giving this one only example the full title of Bird Lord, we should look to see if there is a credible alternative identity which conforms with the iconographic norms. If the bird is not a bird at all but a baby griffin then the image in 12.172 may be re-named Griffin Lord. There are iconographic details that support this reading. The image in 12.158 shows the Griffin Lord carrying a juvenile griffin. So, the griffin does not always have to be full-grown to be a familiar. There are depictions of baby griffins looking like little flying birds in 10.72¹⁰. A provisional identification of this figure as a Griffin Lord holding a baby griffin would thus see the regular iconographic associations preserved.

VIP Lords – Legacy Period (Plates 12.174 to 12.188)

Many of these Lords continue to be depicted in the Legacy Period. The Mighty Lord and Epiphany Lord are seen in 12.174 to 12.177. Of particular note is the Lord's pose in 12.175 giving the chest gesture and standing within the double horns. In 12.176 possibly the only example of a male with an erect penis is seen in the server greeting the Mighty Lord as Epiphany Lord. A Staff Lord is seen in 12.178 holding out his spear in the power gesture. The Sword Lord, Bow Lord, Axe Lord and Mace Lord are not represented. One possible example of the Triple Bud Lord is seen in 12.179. There is comparatively more continuity with the VIP with familiar *Icon*. The Griffin Lord is seen in 12.180 to 12.182 with quite a splendid rendition of the griffin chariot in 12.180. The Lion Lord in 12.183 to 12.185 stands holding his lion on a leash or stretching his controlling arm over his familiar. A Bull Lord is seen in 12.186 and an Agrimi Lord in 12.187 and 12.188. Interestingly, agrimia now pull the Lord's chariot in 12.187. We see a Hound Lord in 12.177 holding a huge familiar with very ornate collar. There appears to be no Dolphin Lord.

VIP Master of Animals

VIP Master of Animals – Early Seal Period (Plates 12.189 to 12.191)

The antithetical group formula is also used to depict the Master of Animals. As with the Mistress figures, the Master is placed centrally, usually standing in the combination pose with his attendant animals flanking him. Various heraldic poses are used for the animals who mostly face him although they can be addorsed. In the Early Seal Period the figures are not as clear but the antithetical group formula is unmistakable. In 12.189 to 12.191 we see, at a very early time, a possible Lion Master and a Hound Master and then, somewhat later, we have a possible Dolphin Master.

VIP Master of Animals – Minoan High Art (Plates 12.192 to 12.194)

The identity of the Master is clearer in Minoan High Art. In 12.192 the griffin and lion combine in attendance to a Griffin Lion Master in one of the few examples where the attendant animals are different.

¹⁰ This particular problem of the identification of young or baby griffins warrants comment on two later images from other media. A wall painting fragment from Mycenae, National Museum inv. No. 11652, shows a figure wearing a tusk helmet holding a young griffin. A pottery example from Lefkandi shows a griffin pair feeding baby bird griffins in a nest, AP, Plate 88a. The question of the nature of griffin young, whether arriving by mammalian birth or emergence from an egg, was raised in Chapter 10 above.

The damaged sealing in 12.193 shows a Hound Master holding his attendants on long leashes. He is a very interesting Master figure since he is a strongly muscled man holding his hands in the chest gesture as a Mighty Lord and he wears a plumed hat. In 12.194 the Hound Master holds his rather feline-shaped attendants under the jaw. In both 12.192 and 12.194 the animals are rampant to the Master. All Masters depicted wear the belt and kilt.

VIP Master of Animals – *Legacy Period* (Plates 12.195 to 12.212)

The apparent paucity of Master figures in Minoan High Art is corrected in the Legacy Period where all Masters are depicted but the Lion Master above all. A new Master appears, the Genius Master as in 12.195 and 10.143. In 12.195 he holds an attendant genius on each side by the tongue. The Master of Animals *Icon* is doubled in 12.196 to show a Griffin Master with attendants rampant addorsed elevated and a Stag Master with attendants statant addorsed. In 12.197 the Griffin Master has his attendants couchant addorsed on the perimeter groundline, one being inverted. The Lion Master holds his attendants suspended, sometimes inverted, in 12.198, 12.199, 12.202 and 12.204. He favours rampant lions, sometimes addorsed, in 12.200, 12.201 and 12.205. A rare Bull Master is seen in 12.206 with his bulls statant along the perimeter groundline. The Agrimi Master is seen in 12.207 with the agrimia rampant and in 12.208 with them rampant addorsed regardant. The Stag Master shown in 12.196 is seen again in 12.209 with stags rampant. The Hound Master is seen in 12.210 with hounds rampant and in 12.211 with hounds rampant addorsed regardant. A Dolphin Master is seen in 12.212 reaching out to his dolphins diving down each side. All these Masters wear the belt and kilt except for the figure in 12.200 who wears a tunic and a tusk helmet. Some of the Master figure details are of considerable interest. The Master figures in 12.196, both Griffin Master and Stag Master, are shown as in running pose instead of in the usual standing pose. In 12.205 the Master stands between curved altars that provide a support for the front legs of the rampant lions. Some of the details cross-reference the Masters to Lord figures. The Griffin Master in 12.196 carries a staff as a Staff Lord. The Lion Master in 12.201 and the Hound Master in 12.210 give the chest gesture as for the Mighty Lord.

Deities Gesturing

For all the deities described above, apart from the Mistress and Master figures which are governed by their antithetical group composition, the usual body pose is one at rest, either seated or standing. The few exceptions are when a Lady propels her grand boat or a Lord drives his chariot. These divine figures are regularly shown as sole subjects in the focus composition. Sometimes they are accompanied by their creature familiar but even then they stand serene and isolated. However, deities do gesture even in this isolated state and certainly to mortal women and men in complex scenes. There are seven gestures that are used only by divine figures: the hips, chest, brandishing, pointing, beckoning, toasting and power gestures. There are two gestures that divine figures use as well as mortals: the hands high and greeting gestures.

The hips gesture is where the figure places arms akimbo to her hips. This gesture identifies Ladies as in 12.40, 12.41 and 12.44 and may be linked to tying the waist girdle which holds the skirt. The chest gesture sees the male figure bend both arms up horizontal to place hands at his chest. This gesture is the signifying gesture of the Mighty Lord as in 12.133, 12.174 and 12.175. When one hand of the Mighty Lord is being used to hold the staff or to reach out he places the other in the chest gesture as in 12.132, 12.136 and 12.45. The brandishing gesture is when the figure holds a weapon up in the air as with the sword in 12.55, 12.60, 12.141 and 12.147. This gesture is made by the Sword Lady and the Sword Lord. The pointing gesture is where the male figure uses the index finger to point before the Seated Great Lady as in 12.46 and 12.47. In 12.46 the Lord actually touches the Lady's arm, indicating he must also have equivalence as a deity. Parallels with the Mighty Lord who gives the chest gesture in 12.45 link the three images and allow the pointing gesture to belong to the Mighty Lord. With the beckoning gesture the figure bends the arm up and holds the hand open but facing themselves, thus inviting the viewer

to approach. A Lord beckons in 12.149 and a Lady in 12.43. The toasting gesture is only seen in 12.87 where the Great Seated Lady raises a chalice as she is approached by four geniuses. The power gesture, perhaps the most striking of the deity gestures, may be given by a Lady or a Lord in holding out the power symbol. It is usually a staff as in 12.53, 12.54, 12.132, 12.134 and 12.138 but may be a bow as in 12.57 or a spear as in 12.178.

The two gestures that deities regularly share with mortals, the hands high and the greeting gestures, were discussed when examples of women and men gesturing were given in Chapter 9, 9.70 to 9.72, 9.76 and 9.78. The hands high gesture does not necessarily require a recipient to be shown. It is seen early given by Ladies in 12.21, 12.25 and 12.29 and by a Lord in 12.131. Later examples include the Lady giving the hands high gesture in 12.32, 12.48, 12.90 and 12.94. For the greeting gesture both Ladies and Lords can hold their arm and hand out. Again, it is not necessary to have a recipient shown but in cultscapes, mortals receive, and return, the gesture. The Epiphany Lady addresses mortals below her in 12.48, 12.49 and 12.52 while the Epiphany Lord greets a man in 12.176. The Sea Lady greets the shrine as she nears land in 12.66. When the Lady is sole subject she may give the greeting gesture as if to unseen recipients as in 12.64. Both the Lion Lord in 12.142 and the Hound Lord in 12.170 also give the greeting gesture as if to unseen recipients. The monkey, as befits its semi-divine nature, can give the hands high gesture as in 10.11, 10.16 and 10.17 and the greeting gesture as in 12.34, 12.152 and 10.18.

Iconographic Interpretation: Minoan and Mycenaean Pantheons

It has been a long investigation of human figure depictions but at the end we have separated the immortals from the mortals¹¹. From all the human figure representations we have selected those figures that do not have any special iconographic details to set them apart from living normal lives in this world. In Chapter 9 we have called them women and men and have explored their roles. From all the human figure representations we have selected those figures that meet specific deity criteria. In this Chapter we have described their exploits and explained their associations. We have found our anthropomorphic goddesses and gods! These immortal beings are gathered under the title, VIP, and we have given them descriptive names appropriate to their presentation as either Lady/Mistress or Lord/Master. Table 1 presents all the forty VIPs known down to the end of Minoan High Art as the provisional Minoan Pantheon of the seal images. Table 2 presents all the twenty-eight VIPs continuing into the Legacy Period along with some newly-appearing versions of Master figures as the provisional Mycenaean Pantheon of the seal images. As before, we will turn to the interpretation of the images down to and including Minoan High Art in the paragraphs below and wait until Chapter 14 to discuss the images of the Legacy Period.

However, before proceeding, it is necessary to comment upon a significant omission in the Pantheons. Those readers familiar with Aegean iconography in other media will already have noticed that there is no snake lady. Just as there are no snakes in seal images, there are no snake goddesses either; thus, there are no parallels to the faience figures from Knossos. Emily Bonney, in a carefully argued treatise, has convincingly shown that the faience “Snake Goddesses” are a particular creation of the MM III Knossos Palace built after the great destructions at the end of MM II. As such, they have no precedents in Minoan iconography and, once they were buried in the Temple Repositories after the next earthquake, they leave no trace in subsequent neopalatial art¹². This assessment accords with the seal evidence and

11 The naturalism of the rendition of figures may cause some readers to query whether such “normal” representations could possibly be gods. Where is the awe and separation from the mortal sphere that one expects in the portrayal of the gods? Its absence leads us again to comparisons with Classical art. I thank Guenter Koepcke for his illuminating comments on this matter in our discussions on the art of Minoan Crete.

12 Bonney 2011, 171-190, pays particular attention to the five extant pieces, illustrated Figs. 3 to 7, which have been assembled by Evans into two complete figurines. She assesses them as Cretan-Syrian hybrids reflecting the relationship of the Knossos ruling elite of the time with the Syrian states through the production of the shining faience and through paring eastern iconographic details with Minoan elements. See also Goodison and Morris

calls for a review of the importance that has been accorded the two statuettes, reconstructed from various pieces, as emblematic of Minoan culture.

From the Early Seal Period down to the end of Minoan High Art we have identified a total of forty VIPs as deity figures: fifteen Ladies and seven Mistresses; and fourteen Lords and four Masters. Table 1 lists the goddesses as the Epiphany, Staff, Great, Seated, Flower, Sea, Bow, Sword, Dragon, Griffin, Lion, Hound, Agrimi, Bird and Dolphin Ladies and the Griffin, Lion, Hound, Agrimi, Ram, Dolphin and Bird Mistresses. The gods are listed as the Epiphany, Staff, Mighty, Bow, Sword, Mace, Axe, Triple Bud Rod, Griffin, Lion, Hound, Agrimi, Dolphin and Bull Lords and the Griffin, Lion, Hound and Dolphin Masters. Listing the deities in Table 1 in two gendered columns brings out clearly where there are significant pairings. Where the deities are involved in action we have an Epiphany Lady and Lord and a Staff Lady and Lord. Where weapons are held we have a Bow Lady and Lord and a Sword Lady and Lord. Where deities are identified by their familiar we have a Griffin, Lion, Hound, Agrimi and Dolphin Lady and Lord. Similar pairings can be seen across the Mistress and Master deities in both Griffin, Lion, Hound and Dolphin Mistress and Master images. These significant pairings also throw into sharp relief the VIP Ladies and Lords that appear to have no gendered pair: the Great, Seated, Flower, Sea, Dragon and Bird Ladies and the Mighty, Mace, Axe, Triple Bud Rod and Bull Lord. These pairings and non-pairings, which are never trespassed in the iconography, testify to a Pantheon of divine beings that is both expansive but also intricately subtle. The artists created this iconography to picture the deities and the supernatural world that existed in the minds of the Minoans. It is difficult for us to read this iconography and reach back to the Minoan Pantheon. We have no text references and rather fewer images of deities than we would wish, some only evidenced in one clear example. However, the iconographic detail provided in the images that remain to us can take us a long way into understanding the nature of each divinity.

The forty Minoan deity VIPs listed in Table 1 show fifteen Ladies and seven Mistresses and fourteen Lords and four Masters. But do we actually have twenty-two different goddesses and eighteen different gods? Perhaps some of these images are not indicative of separate goddesses and gods but of separate aspects of their power. What we may have are twenty-two female deity personas and eighteen male deity personas, each of which shows some part of a particular deity's identity. Thus, the actual deity persons may be fewer in number. Take the example of the Classical Greek god, Apollo, who is regularly shown with his bow or with his lyre. The two images rarely share any iconographic details that would link the two images together and thus identify the same deity person but the literature provides just that detail to show that the two images are personas of the one god. In our Aegean world we do not have the literature detail to link any of the personas together but we do have iconographic details that cross-reference images and provide the evidence that some images are indeed personas of the one deity. There are two areas where the investigation of this cross-referencing of iconographic detail can reveal personas rather than persons and thus help find the actual deity identity. They are the pairings of Ladies and Mistresses, Lords and Masters and the domains of the deities.

Person or Persona: Ladies, Mistresses, Lords and Masters

Iconographic details which may suggest the same identity are the VIP with familiar figures and the Mistress and Master figures. There are seven female VIP with familiar figures: the Dragon, Griffin, Lion, Hound, Agrimi, Dolphin and Bird Ladies. There are seven Mistresses. There is no Dragon Mistress but there are Griffin, Lion, Hound, Agrimi, Ram, Dolphin and Bird Mistresses. With the Griffin Lady as in 12.73 and 12.74 and the Griffin Mistress as in 12.99 to 12.101, the female figure wears the usual female clothing and the attendant griffins share the expected details of lion bodies and eagle wings with curls on the wing bone. With the Lion Lady as in 12.75 to 12.77 and the Lion Mistress as in 12.102 to 12.107, the female figures and the lion attendants exhibit details that are usual in their iconographic schema.

1998, 113-132 and particularly Kenneth Lapatin for his treatise on the forgeries of figurines in his 2002 *Mysteries of the Snake Goddess*.

With both the griffin and the lion Lady-Mistress pairs there is one point of iconographic separation. The horn bow hat is worn by some Griffin Mistresses as in 12.99 and 12.100 and some Lion Mistresses as in 12.105 and 12.106. This striking headdress is not worn by Lady figures while many Mistress figures do not wear it either. It thus appears to be a detail which may sometimes be used within the Mistress of Animals formula but which does not constitute a differentiating detail between Ladies and Mistresses. The Hound Lady in 12.83 beside her huge hound finds a parallel in the Lion Hound Mistress of 12.107. The Agrimi Lady as in 12.78 to 12.82 is paired with the Mistresses in the associated *Icon*, the Mistress with Animal as in 12.120 to 12.127 where the nurturing and control of the animal is continued. In these images the Ram Mistress is so close to the Agrimi Mistress as to be regarded as a variant form, especially since in so many examples it is not clear whether a young agrimi or a young sheep is being depicted. The Dolphin Lady in 12.86 is paired with the Dolphin Mistress in 12.112 and 12.113. The Bird Lady as in 12.54, 12.84 and 12.85 matches the Bird Mistress in 12.108 to 12.111. Overall, the iconographic detail leads us to assess the Lady and Mistress figures as different personas of the same six deities associated with the animal identities of griffin, lion, hound, agrimi, dolphin and bird respectively.

With the Lord and Master parallels we have six Lord VIP with familiar figures: the Griffin, Lion, Hound, Agrimi, Dolphin and Bull Lords. There are four Master figures: Griffin, Lion, Hound and Dolphin. The four Master figures in the Master of Animals compositions 12.189 to 12.194 are shown with their griffin, lion, hound and dolphin attendants. We see matching detail with the Griffin Lord as in 12.153 to 12.158, the Lion Lord as in 12.159 to 12.164, the Hound Lord as in 12.170 and 12.171 and the Dolphin Lord in 12.173. The iconographic detail thus assesses that four of the Lord and Master pairings – griffin, lion, hound and dolphin – are different personas of the same deities.

In summary, the correlation of iconographic detail across the animal identities of familiar and attendant allows us to identify the Mistress/Master figures as special artistic renditions of certain Ladies and Lords who have their primary personas in the VIP with familiar formula. We should note that the evidence for the Mistress of Animals and the Master of Animals lies overwhelmingly in the seal images. We should also note that having the alternative formulas of Mistress/Master and VIP with familiar for depicting these personas not only multiplies the number of images of the deity but also reinforces that deity identity. Accordingly, we will take the group of the seven Lady figures in the VIP with familiar *Icon* as naming significant female deities and the group of the six Lord figures in the VIP with familiar *Icon* similarly as naming significant male deities. By recognising the Mistress/Master figures as alternate renditions of certain Lady/Lord figures we have reduced the forty personas to twenty-nine, some fifteen Ladies and fourteen Lords.

Person or Persona: Domains of the Deities

Much information is available about the nature of the VIP Lady and the VIP Lord personas when we investigate their spheres of interest, the domains over which they have power and the places where they are at home. Some reveal their identity within precincts we may term the Fertile Earth, the Fecund Marshland, the Wild Mountain and the Deep Ocean. Others reveal their identity in the particular attributes which set them apart from other immortals, especially when they do not have gendered parallels like the Great Lady, Dragon Lady, Mighty Lord and Bull Lord. Again, it is the interconnectedness of the iconographic detail that directs the interpretation.

For the Fertile Earth the dominant VIP image is the Great Lady, seen most clearly in the Minoan High Art images 12.33 to 12.47. Her large voluptuous body is regularly shown seated in some auspicious place as the Seated Lady. The privilege of being seated is granted only to the female, the Lady deity, and much is revealed of her nature in the identifying detail of the seat that she is sitting upon. The Great Lady's seat can be rocky ground or a place before a tree, a special stool or chair, a shrine or a place backed by a grand pillar. Her power is thus identified with the very stones of the earth itself, with the vegetation that springs from it, and with the activities of mortals who build special structures for her. In this role she is attended by servers who may also be bearers bringing gifts to her. The earth forms, the vegetation and the attendance of smaller-sized servers are the defining characteristics of the Great Lady. In the Early Seal

Period, this grand seated female image was associated with the triple bud as in 12.25 and an early tree as in 12.27. The continuation of this vegetation interest is seen in the depiction of the Flower Ladies of Minoan High Art as in 12.61 to 12.65 and is particularly clear in 12.62 with the open crocus flowering behind her. The Fertile Earth is part of the natural world of the Minoans, portrayed by their artists as a flower-filled landscape which we have termed the Lily Garden. The Fertile Earth consists of all the farmed plains and the productive hill slopes. It signifies the fertility so desired by agrarian communities that they come to worship the deity that has control over it. Thus, the Great Lady can be seen as the feminine principle immanent in the real world as the great goddess who has dominion over the earth and its productivity. Her persona as the Flower Lady reveals her core identity. Her persona as Seated Lady declares her pre-eminence.

The earthly domain of the Dragon Lady is the Fecund Marshland. She is such a powerful figure as she rides her dragon familiar, side-saddle as is appropriate for a female, as in 12.71 and 12.72. This is particularly clear when the modelling of 12.71 is seen in the sealing itself as in 13.41. The cultscape of 12.71 places the Dragon Lady in the Papyrus Garden of the supernatural world in the company of the Griffin Lord. Her dragon is depicted in considerable detail as to body shape and skin surface, enjoying its animal life in this very Papyrus Garden, as indicated by the papyrus and palm plants and wavelines in 10.115 to 10.117 and the sealing 13.26¹³. The dragon also forms part of each of the two grand boats carrying the Sea Lady to shore as in the cultscapes of 12.66 and 12.69. The dragon's upper body arches over to have the head protecting the shrine being carried in the boat. The grand boat always traverses shallow waters close to land in contrast to ships which sail the high seas. This cross-referencing of iconographic details suggests that the Sea Lady is to be read as the persona that the Dragon Lady uses when coming to visit her worshippers in the real world. It is appropriate that she arrives at land which is on the edge of the coastal sea. The edge-of-the-sea marshes or shallow waters are documented in many images through the iconographic details of tricurved arch pattern, waveline and wateredge and of the waterfowl birdlife¹⁴. The fecundity of these watery realms is evidenced by the wild lushness of the plant growth and in the flocks of water birds that find in it their natural home. This watery domain is a parallel to the firm productive land which is the domain of the Great Lady with her persona of the Flower Lady. To find such a landscape depicted in seal designs comes as no surprise when one considers that the climate might well have been much wetter in the Bronze Age and marshy sea edges are likely to have been of larger extent. It would also be necessary to have a powerful deity controlling and caring for these areas and the Dragon Lady appears to be the principal deity in charge here. Yet, there is already a deity identified with the Fecund Marshland, the Bird Lady, and she may be seen as a persona of the Dragon Lady and Sea Lady by iconographic cross-referencing. The Bird Lady has a relationship with the watery shallows as in 12.54 where her bird familiars carry her beyond the wateredge. As the Bird Mistress she stands on a waveline/wateredge in 12.108. The many images of birdwomen as in 11.7 to 11.20 should also be kept in mind here, although we cannot trace the links any more closely because the birdwomen depictions are so self-referencing and thus do not reveal iconographic details that reach beyond the image. As the Dragon Lady, Sea Lady and Bird Lady do not have Lord pairings, their cluster with cross-referencing details suggests female oversight of the Fecund Marshland. Yet, there are more iconographic linkages. The Bird Lady is also the Great Lady in 12.84 and, through being carried aloft by pairs of birds over a flower field and flowering plants, she is also identified with the Flower Lady persona. The grand boats of the Dragon/Sea Lady also carry triple bud prows with the triple bud opening like a crocus flower, a link to the Great/Flower Lady. The cross-referencing through these various images suggests that the domains of the Fecund Earth and the Fecund Marshland are but different aspects of the sacred earth. However, we cannot be sure whether they are controlled by the one female deity who has two personas or by two separate deities envisioned as the Great Lady who is seated on rocks or shrines and the Dragon

13 See the discussion on the dragon in Chapter 10 above.

14 See the discussions in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 above.

Lady who rides on her fantastic familiar. There is one further point to consider about the nature of the domain of the Fecund Marshland. It appears to be a continuation in this world of the supernatural marshes of the Papyrus Garden. Once again, we are presented with one of those evocative transitions within the Minoan idiom that splices the supernatural world into this real one in effortless art.

The domain of the Wild Mountain lies beyond the lower plains and hillsides and encompasses the forests of the high country. This is the wilderness stronghold of untamed nature with its wild animals and their rapacious predators. This is the domain of the Agrimi Lady and the Agrimi Lord and the Bow Lady and the Bow Lord. The Wild Mountain is one of the earliest subjects depicted with its rocky ground, its indigenous prey animals, the agrimi, stag and boar, and their predators, the indigenous hound and the exotic lion. The presence of the lion predator reminds us that this wild domain is not entirely set in the real Cretan world but has another dimension. These wild animals and their predators become the familiars of the Agrimi, Lion and Hound Ladies as in 12.78 to 12.83 and the Agrimi, Lion and Hound Lords as in 12.159 to 12.164 and 12.169 to 12.171. This cluster of Ladies and Lords shows nurturing care and a special relationship with their familiars which is carefully recorded in the iconographic detail. The signature endemic animal, the agrimi, is the spirit of the forest and all the wild places and, as the most depicted, also stands for the other denizens of the forest, the stag and the boar. The signature endemic predator, the hound, and the exotic wild predator, the lion, are intimately linked with the agrimi. They are the protagonists in the many hunting and animal attack scenes so beloved of Minoan High Art. Yet, there is another link when predation is considered: that is with the human hunter, who cherishes the hound as his beloved companion and chooses the well-crafted bow as his weapon. There is a special bond between the hunter and the quarry whose life he takes, a bond that is observed in various ways across many hunter societies. Hunting prowess is elevated to a divine attribute when embodied in the Bow Lady and Bow Lord. In 12.57 the Bow Lady presents her bow in the power gesture. In 12.141 the Bow Lord as Epiphany Lord brandishes a bow and a hunting dagger. These two deities are also shown in their alternate persona with their animal familiars. The Bow Lady is the Lion Lady when seen with her bow and her lion in 12.58. The Bow Lord is the Lion Lord when seen with his bow and his lion in 12.142. The Bow Lord is the Hound Lord when seen with his bow and his hound in 12.144 to 12.146. So, once again, it appears that we do not have separate deities here but various deity personas. We may see the Agrimi Lady and Agrimi Lord as the principal deities responsible for the nurturing of the creatures of the wild, the agrimi, stag and boar which become prey and quarry. We may see the Bow Lady and Bow Lord as the divine hunters and the hound and lion as their companion predators. If the bond between hunter and quarry observed in the human sphere is also elevated to the divine, then these personas coalesce. The Bow Lady, Agrimi Lady, Bow Lord and Agrimi Lord, either separately or together, hold dominion over the Wild Mountain. They have the power to control indigenous animals and exotic beasts through nurture and companionship or death in the hunt.

The watery expanse of the Deep Ocean is another wild and untamed place but it lies beyond the safety of land for humans. This is the domain of the Dolphin Lord and Dolphin Lady. Mortals experience ocean power in different ways. They know it through the sea life which provides them food: dolphin, fish, octopus squid, argonaut, crab, sea-urchin, shell and triton. They celebrate these creatures by depicting them in art in all their amazing variety – even noting the predatory behaviour of dolphin, octopus and triton. Mortals experience the ocean as the highway which grants access to far-away lands. The ship is a constant motif from the earliest images and is regularly shown with its hull carried along on a waveline. However, the Deep Ocean is also a domain that holds great danger. Ships stay home to avoid the bad weather of winter but even in other seasons violent unpredictable storms can destroy both craft and crew even as they race to safe harbour. From time to time a tsunami brings all the crushing power of the ocean down upon an unsuspecting seashore, reminding humans of the uncontrollable power of the seismic shock. The dominant sea animal is the dolphin which is a beloved image from the earliest seals to the end. It is the signature animal for the high seas and so becomes the identifying familiar of the Dolphin Lady and Dolphin Lord as in 12.86 and 12.173 and the identifying attendants of the Dolphin Mistress and Master as in 12.112, 12.113 and 12.191. Certainly, the sealing image in 12.173 and 13.48 is one

of the most significant records to remain to us. It reveals the Dolphin Lord, with his familiar leaping down behind him, as a convincing principal persona for the deity controlling the Deep Ocean and its sea creatures. Yet, the Dolphin Lord must also be the controller of the storm and the tsunami. In 12.173 the Dolphin Lord is the Mace Lord holding his mace insignia over his shoulder, although another image of the Mace Lord in 12.130 does not show the dolphin. With no other comparisons available, we are left to ponder if the mace is the weapon which the Dolphin Lord uses to stir up the storm or to provoke the tsunami. In all, the domain of the Deep Ocean enjoys a peculiarly Minoan iconography developed by an island people living intimately with their vast surrounding waters. The Dolphin Lord is indeed a most powerful deity.

The Mighty Lord is the statement of male power. He is a distinct and separate figure, standing tall and exuding the power residing in his male body as in 12.132 to 12.137. He wears the usual male belt and kilt but does not parade with any equipment which could link him to war or the hunt. His only consistent identification is the chest gesture. However, the Mighty Lord joins the Great Lady in some very specific images which led Georgios Rethemiotakis to describe them as the “Divine Couple”¹⁵. In 12.45 to 12.47, the Great Lady, as Seated Lady posed on rocky ground or shrine, welcomes the Mighty Lord into her space. In 12.84 the Seated Lady as a Bird Lady is carried aloft over flowering bushes by her two bird familiars while the Mighty Lord, a distinct and separate figure standing tall, reaches out to her. In 12.45 where both give a reaching gesture their hands almost touch and she responds with a heart gesture. In 12.47 where he gives a pointing gesture she also responds with a heart gesture while in 12.47 when he gives the pointing gesture he actually touches her, holding her by the wrist as she also points her finger¹⁶. These particular images featuring the Great Lady and Mighty Lord appear to be a particular sub-set of the VIP granting audience *Icon* where the male and female deities are in a special relationship as indicated by their significant gesturing to each other – indeed, a divine couple as Rethemiotakis proposes. There is already a parallel for the portrayal of a close relationship between a female and a male in the human couple *Icon* where the same gestures are used between them. This we read as a portrayal of marriage¹⁷. It is hard to escape the conclusion that we have here, in the divine sphere, a parallel portrayal. We should consider these images the presentation of an *ieros gamos*, a sacred marriage, between the Great Lady as earth mother and the Mighty Lord as her young consort.

With the Bull Lord we have rather more examples and certainly more iconographic details to make comparisons. The Bull Lord has no gendered parallel. He is fully anthropomorphic when presented in the VIP with familiar *Icon* as a human male figure in 12.165 to 12.168. Substitution allows the fantastic creature, the genius, to act as the Bull Lord in 10.142. The number of bull heads used symbolically reinforces his strong presence. The creation of the bullman image late in Minoan High Art as in 11.28 to 11.33 adds another layer to the complexity of understanding what the bull signifies. As this hybrid creature encapsulates the strength of both the male and the bull, the bullman can be seen as the codified form of the Bull Lord. Since the bullman images are presented in the focus composition there are few iconographic details that can tease out the meaning further by comparison with other images. Then there are the many varied depictions of the ceremony of the bull sports, a selection of the best seen in 9.157 to 9.168. The amount of artistic endeavour expended in portraying the power of the bull in these graphic bull sports scenes exceeds any other animal portrayal. As argued earlier, while the bravery and skill of the human leaper are celebrated, it is the elemental power of the bull that is the defining message of the image. Thus, we must consider that the Bull Lord has one of his most significant portrayals in his animal form as the bull avatar. In all these images the bull is raised to a mythic level of speed and destructive power. If the bull is not a bull but a god being worshipped through the ceremonial dance of

15 Rethemiotakis, 2016-2017, 1-29, in discussing the image on a gold signet from Poros.

16 This image has been termed “*sacra conversazione*”, recalling Renaissance compositions. However, this is a misnomer and, by suggesting anachronistic parallels, it is misleading.

17 See the discussion of the betrothal/marriage relationship between a man and a woman in the section, Private Lives, in Chapter 9 above.

death that is the bull sports, who might he be? To find the domain of the Bull Lord in this real world we must acknowledge that mortals experience the earth in Crete in one very frightening way. Because the earth can be convulsed at any time by earthquake, it has to be a great god that can control its destructive power. Yet, how would one portray an earthquake god? A Minoan artist could hardly show devastated buildings as that might precipitate the very thing that they hoped to avoid. As in so many other cases, the artist would turn to an animal depiction to encapsulate the power of such a god. The great bull is the obvious choice, even to likening the sound of its charging hooves to the rumbling of an earthquake in the earth far below. Is the interpretation of the Bull Lord with his bull avatar as the earthquake god a leap too far since it is not underpinned by any direct contemporary iconographic details? Not so, if we are correct in interpreting the kneeling the boulder ceremony as a plea for protection from seismic shock. Furthermore, reference to the powers of the Dolphin Lord may help here. Among the many expressions of ocean power gathered under his control is the tsunami. It seems that we may have a pairing of seismic gods here so as to have a full portrayal, similar to the pairing of the Great Lady and the Dragon Lady that was necessary to encompass the full expression of productive earth. The Dolphin Lord controls the tsunami crashing in from the deep ocean and the Bull Lord controls the earthquake striking up from the deep earth. Yet perhaps it is more than a pairing. Perhaps it is the same god. There are iconographic details of bull and dolphin in the next artistic period, 14.40 to 14.42, discussed in Chapter 14, which may help with the identification of these deities. Yet, for the moment, it is a good working hypothesis to see the Bull Lord with his bull avatar and the Dolphin Lord as the fearsome gods of seismic destruction.

Identifying other domains in control of the Great Gods or other relationships between deities is rather more difficult since the examples of each deity are limited. The Sword Lady in 12.60 brandishes a huge sword but has no links to other personas except through the fleecy skirt and diaphanous mantle. The Sword Lord in 12.147 also brandishes a large sword but he is also shown as the Lion Lord who has much more coverage. In other examples, 12.55 and 12.141, the sword is small, more like a hunting dagger as appropriate to the Bow Lord in 12.141. If the Sword Lord and Sword Lady are meant to be the deities controlling war, then their minimal presence reveals that very little weight is given in the supernatural sphere to an area of activity that usually occupies much space in Bronze Age iconography. It appears that the early values of the society in prioritising wild nature and the associated hunt continue to be preferred in the iconography. The three examples of the Axe Lord, 12.148, 12.149 and the Pylos seal, show him carrying his axe insignia over his shoulder. However, it is not the fenestrated axe and there are no iconographic details which can link him to other personas and thus give a fuller view of his range of powers. The Triple Bud Rod Lord as in 12.130 and 12.151 is rarely depicted but must be acknowledged as an important deity because of his long-standing presence and the strength of the triple bud insignia. This may not so much link him to the Great Lady but rather indicate his own direct relationship with fertility, with the sprouting force of plant and flower regenerating each season. Some personas do not appear to have any particular identity attached to them. These are the two pairings of deities, the Epiphany Lady and Lord and the Staff Lady and Lord. Each has a significant feature which names the persona: the pose of appearing on high and the pose of presenting of the staff in the power gesture. These features speak to the majesty and power of the figure but do not elucidate the deity's special nature or domain of control.

The four related personas, the Griffin Lady and Griffin Mistress and the Griffin Lord and Griffin Master, give us rather more examples than the other deities named for their familiar/attendant animal but show few comparative links. The Sea Lady in 12.67 guides her grand boat shaped like a griffin body with griffin head stern while the Griffin Mistress in 12.101 wears a floating scarf at her neck just as the Great Lady does in 12.44. These two comparisons suggest that the griffin deity personas may not be sourcing their identity within a particular domain of power but rather may simply be calling attention to their divinity. The griffin, with its lion power on the earth below and its eagle power in the skies above, may well be a statement of overarching divine power. This would explain its role beside the commanding figures of female and male deities.

So, careful sleuthing of iconographic detail allows us to see, among the twenty-nine deity personas, possibly ten principal deity personas which declare individual divine identity. They are the goddesses of female flourishing, the Great and Dragon Ladies; the wild nature quartet of nurture and predation, the Agrimi Lady and Lord and the Bow Lady and Lord; the male principle of the Mighty Lord; the potent Triple Bud Rod Lord; the formidable god of ocean force, the Dolphin Lord; and the fearsome god of seismic power, the Bull Lord.

Anthropomorphic, Beautiful, Serene and Powerful

In Chapter 9, we saw the elite of Minoan society depicted as beautiful women and men, in the prime of life, clothed in the very best costume and jewellery. As they go about performing their ceremonial roles they are seen as the ideal for humankind, a beautiful pious Minoan Woman and a beautiful brave Minoan Man. In this Chapter, we see this Minoan ideal projected into the supernatural sphere. The Great Gods are depicted as a grander version of the Minoan Woman and the Minoan Man and are the focus of ceremonies performed by those very Minoan mortals. The Great Gods serenely stand in isolation or sit welcoming their mortal servers, their power obvious, revealed in their size, their pose and their familiars.

Table 1 The Minoan Pantheon in the Seal Images

VIP Personas of Deities to the end of Minoan High Art

Goddesses	Gods
Ladies	Lords
Epiphany Lady Staff Lady	Epiphany Lord Staff Lord
Great Lady Seated Lady Flower Lady	
Sea Lady	
	Mighty Lord
Bow Lady Sword Lady	Bow Lord Sword Lord
	Mace Lord Axe Lord Triple Bud Rod Lord
Dragon Lady	
Griffin Lady Lion Lady Hound Lady Agrimi Lady	Griffin Lord Lion Lord Hound Lord Agrimi Lord
Dolphin Lady*	Dolphin Lord*
Bird Lady	
	Bull Lord
Mistresses	Masters
Griffin Mistress Lion Mistress Hound Mistress*	Griffin Master Lion Master Hound Master
Agrimi Mistress Ram Mistress	
Dolphin Mistress	Dolphin Master*
Bird Mistress	

*Personas that have one clear example for the period

Table 2 The Mycenaean Pantheon in the Seal Images

VIP Personas of Deities Continuing into the Legacy Period

Goddesses	Gods
Ladies	Lords
	Epiphany Lord* Staff Lord
Great Lady Seated Lady	
	Mighty Lord
	Triple Bud Rod Lord*
Dragon Lady*	
Griffin Lady	Griffin Lord
	Lion Lord Hound Lord* Agrimi Lord
	Bull Lord*
Mistresses	Masters
Griffin Mistress Lion Mistress Hound Mistress* Agrimi Mistress*	Griffin Master Lion Master Hound Master Agrimi Master
	Stag Master
Ram Mistress*	
Dolphin Mistress	Dolphin Master*
Bull Mistress*	Bull Master*
	Genius Master

*Personas that have one clear example for the period

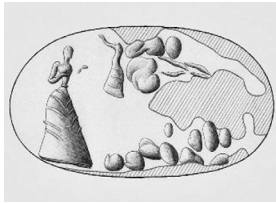
Comparisons with Images in Other Media

1. Bowl and fruitstand from the Old Palace at Phaistos showing the Great Lady in mountain shape with two servers and the Flower Lady with servers holding crocuses.
AP, Plates II and III.
2. The Goddess in the Crocus Gatherers fresco from Thera as the Great Lady in the VIP granting audience *Icon*.
AWP, Plate 22, 2.
3. The gold and ivory statue of the Mighty Lord from Palaikastro.
MacGillivray, J. A., J.M. Driessen and L.H. Sackett, 2000.
The Palaikastro Kouros: a Minoan Chryselephantine Statuette and its Aegean Bronze Age Context.
4. The Agrimi Chariot and the Griffin Chariot on the short ends of the Agia Triada Sarcophagus.
CM, Plate XXIX B, XXX.
5. Clay idols giving the hands high gesture.
FLL, Plates 167 to 169.

Plates 12.1 to 12.212

Identifying Deities: The Five Criteria

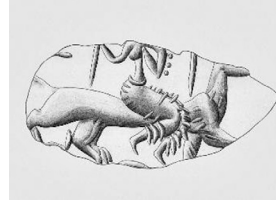
1. *The Fantastic and the Supra-Normal*



12.1 – Epiphany Lady
(II.6 6)



12.2 – Lion Lord
(II.8 237)



12.3 – Dragon Lady
(II.6 33)



12.4 – Griffin Lord
(II.8 193)

2. *Size Differential*



12.5 – Epiphany Lord
(VI 278)



12.6 – Seated Lady
(II.6 8)



12.7 – Great Lady
(X 261)

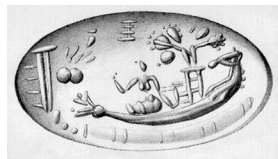


12.8 – Great Lady
(II.6 1)

3. *Pose and Position*



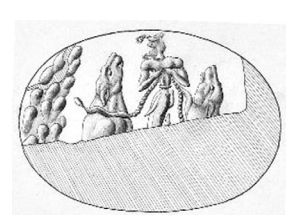
12.9 – Great Lady
(VS 1A 177)



12.10 – Sea Lady
(II.3 252)



12.11 – Mighty Lord
(VS1A 142)



12.12 – Hound Master
(II.8 248)

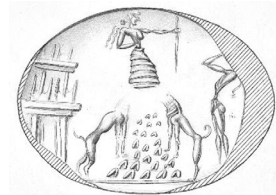
4. *Centre of Attention*



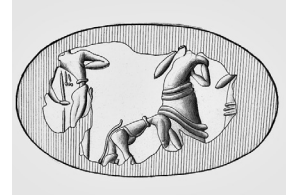
12.13 – Great Lady
(II.8 268)



12.14 – Great Lady
(II.3 103)



12.15 – Staff Lady
(II.8 256)



12.16 – Mighty Lord
(II.7 3)

5. *Sole Subject*



12.17 – Bow Lady
(XI 26)



12.18 – Dolphin Lord
(II.8 258)



12.19 – Great Lady
(II.6 23)

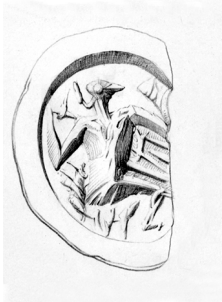


12.20 – Bow Lord
(II.6 36)

Presenting the Ladies and Mistresses

VIP Ladies

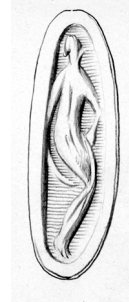
VIP Ladies – *Early Seal Period*



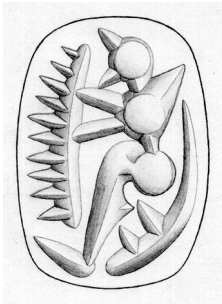
12.21 – Seated Lady
(II.1 477a/EM III-MM IA?)



12.22 – Lion Lady
(II.1 55/EM III-MM IA)



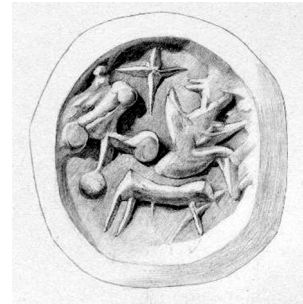
12.23 – Lady
(II.1 162/EM III-MM IA)



12.24 – Seated Lady
(VS 1A 325a/MM II)



12.25 – Flower Seated Lady
(II.2 242a/MM II)



12.26 – Seated Lady
(IX D3c/MM II)



12.27 – Seated Lady
(VI 45a/MM II)



12.28 – Great Seated Lady
(III 154a/MM II)



12.29 – Seated Lady
(XII 15b/MM II)

VIP Ladies – *Experimentation Period*



12.30 – Seated Lady
(I 416c/MM II)



12.31 – Lady
(II.8 39/MM II)



12.32 – Flower Lady?
(II.3 239/MM III-LM I)

VIP Ladies – Minoan High Art

Great Lady, Seated Lady – Minoan High Art



12.33 – Great Seated Lady
(II.8 268/LM I)



12.34 – Great Seated Lady
(II.3 103/LM I-LM II)



12.35 – Great Seated Lady
(I 17/LB I-LB II)



12.36 – Great Seated Lady
(II.6 8/LM I)



12.37 – Great Seated Lady
(XI 30/LB I-LB II)



12.38 – Great Seated Lady
(VI 284/LB I-LB II)



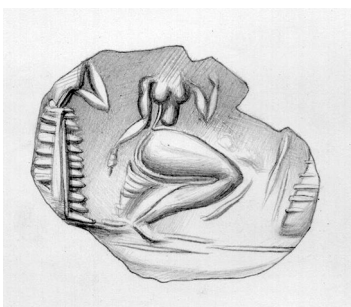
12.39 – Great Seated Lady
(VI 283/LB I-LB II)



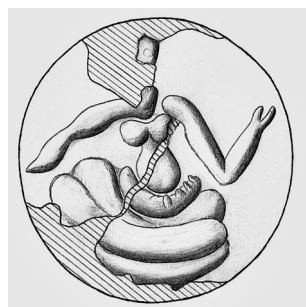
12.40 – Great Lady, servers
(II.6 1/LM I)



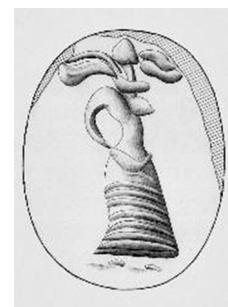
12.41 – Great Lady, servers
(II.3 218/LM I-LM II)



12.42 – Great Lady, servers
(VS 1A 179/LM I)



12.43 – Seated Lady
(II.7 22/LM I)



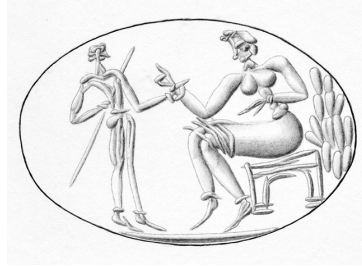
12.44 – Great Lady
(II.6 23/LM I)

The Great Gods

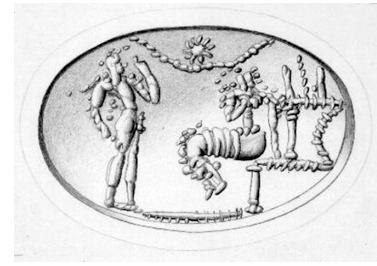
Great Lady, Seated Lady – *Minoan High Art (cont.)*



12.45 – Great Lady, Mighty Lord
(X 261/LM I-LM II)



12.46 – Great Lady, Mighty Lord
(I 101/LB I-LB II?)

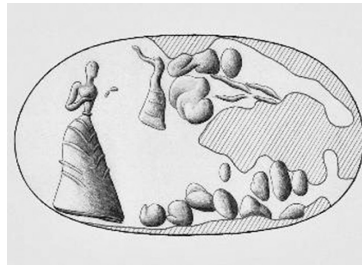


12.47 – Great Lady, Mighty Lord
(V 199/LM I-LM II?)

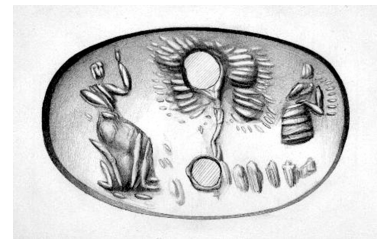
Epiphany Lady – *Minoan High Art*



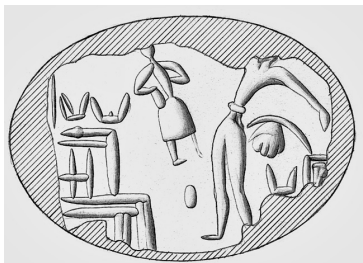
12.48 – Epiphany Lady
(II.3 51/LM I-LM II)



12.49 – Epiphany Lady
(II.6 6/LM I)



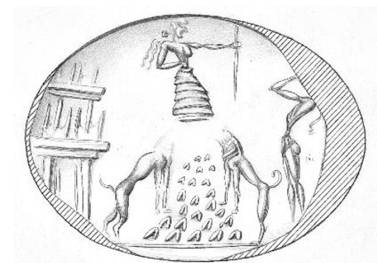
12.50 – Epiphany Lady
(II.3 305/LM I)



12.51 – Epiphany Lady
(II.7 1/LM I)



12.52 – Epiphany Lady
(VI 280/LM I)



12.53 – Staff Lady, Epiphany Lady
(II.8 256/LM I)

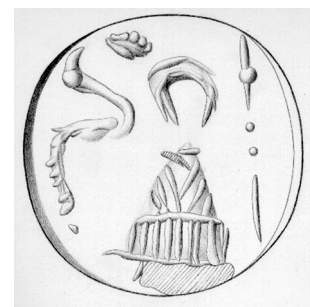
Staff Lady – *Minoan High Art*



12.54 – Staff Lady, Bird Lady
(II.8 257/LM I)



12.55 – Staff Lady, Sword Lady
(I 226/LB I-LB II)



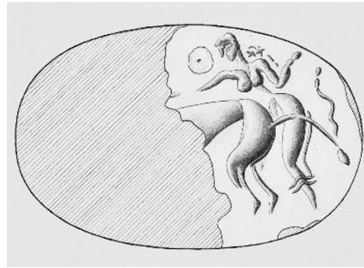
12.56 – Staff Lady, Bird Lady
(II.4 125/LM I-LM II?)

The Great Gods

Bow Lady – Minoan High Art



12.57 – Bow Lady
(XI 26/LB I-LB II)



12.58 – Bow Lady, Lion Lady
(II.6 35/LM I)



12.59 – Bow Lady
(II.6 26/LM I)

Sword Lady – Minoan High Art



12.60 – Sword Lady
(II.3 16/LB I)

Flower Lady – Minoan High Art



12.61 – Flower Lady
(XI 20a/LM I)



12.62 – Flower Lady
(III 349/LM I)

Flower Lady – Minoan High Art



12.63 – Flower Lady
(II.6 27/LM I)

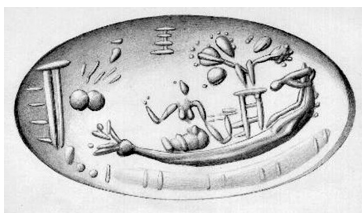


12.64 – Flower Lady
(XI 347/LM I-LM II)

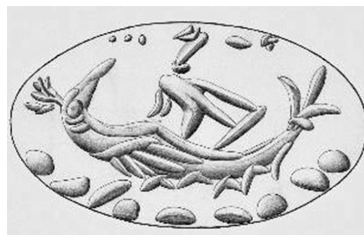


12.65 – Flower Lady
(VS 3 85/LB I-LB II)

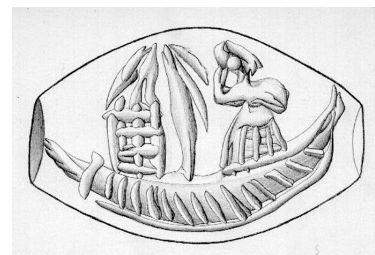
Sea Lady – Minoan High Art



12.66 – Sea Lady
(II.3 252/LM I)



12.67 – Sea Lady
(II.6 20/LM I)



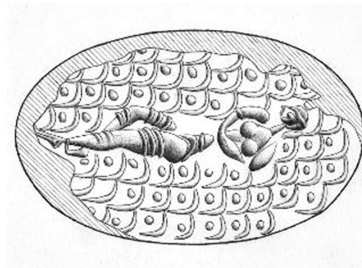
12.68 – Sea Lady
(VS 1A 55/LM I)

The Great Gods

Sea Lady – Minoan High Art

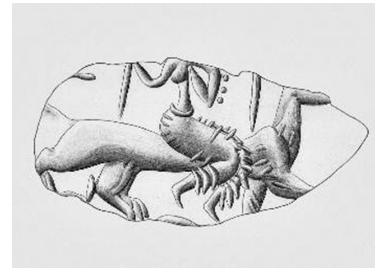


12.69 – Sea Lady
(Minos Ring/LM I)



12.70 – Sea Lady
(II.8 264/LM I)

Dragon Lady – Minoan High Art



12.71 – Dragon Lady
(II.6 33/LM I)

Dragon Lady – Minoan High Art



12.72 – Dragon Lady
(VI 321/LM I-LM II)

Griffin Lady – Minoan High Art



12.73 – Griffin Lady
(Archanes Griffin Ring/LM I)



12.74 – Griffin Lady
(VIII 146/LB I-LB II)

Lion Lady – Minoan High Art



12.75 – Lion Lady
(V 253/LM I-LM II)

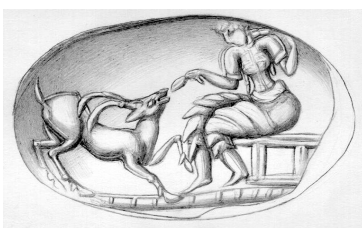


12.76 – Lion Lady
(XI 256/LM I)

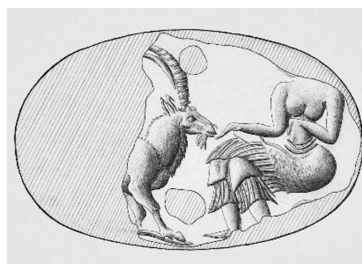


12.77 – Lion Lady
(V 584/LB I-LB II)

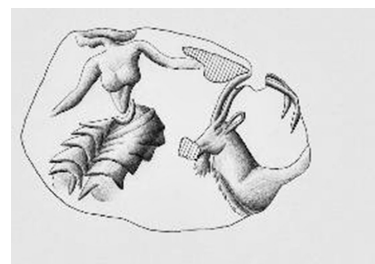
Agrimi Lady – Minoan High Art



12.78 – Agrimi Lady
(VS 1A 175/LM I)



12.79 – Agrimi Lady
(II.6 30/LM I)



12.80 – Agrimi Lady
(II.6 31/LM I)

The Great Gods

Agrimi Lady – Minoan High Art



12.81 – Agrimi Lady
(X 27/LM I)



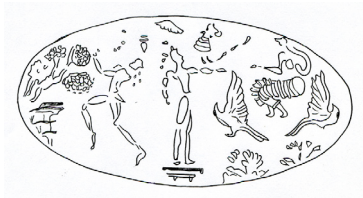
12.82 – Agrimi Lady
(X 160/LM I)

Hound Lady – Minoan High Art



12.83 – Hound Lady
(VS 1B 58/LB I-LB II)

Bird Lady – Minoan High Art

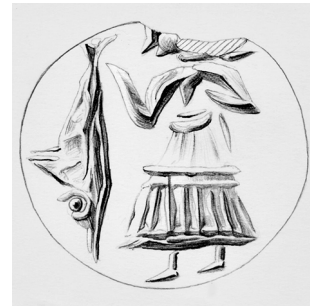


12.84 – Bird Lady, Mighty Lord
(Poros Ring/LM I)



12.85 – Bird Lady
(II.3 170/LM I)

Dolphin Lady – Minoan High Art

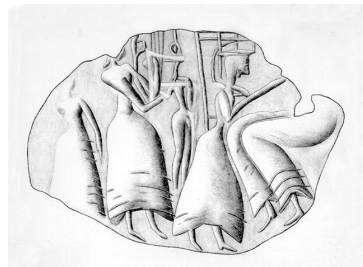


12.86 – Dolphin Lady
(VI 324/LM I)

VIP Ladies – Legacy Period



12.87 – Great Seated Lady
(I 179/LB II)



12.88 – Great Seated Lady
(I 361/LB IIIA?)



12.89 – Great Lady
(I 321/LB IIIA1)



12.90 – Dragon Lady
(I 167/LB II-LB IIIA1)



12.91 – Griffin Lady
(I 128/LB II-LB IIIA?)



12.92 – Griffin Lady
(VS 1B 429/LB II-LB IIIA1)

The Great Gods

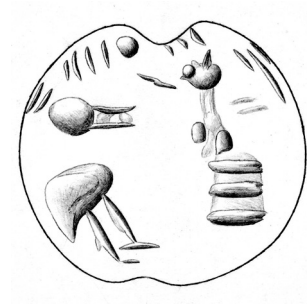
VIP Ladies – Legacy Period (*cont.*)



12.93 – Griffin Lady
(VIII 95/LM IIIA1-LM IIIA2)



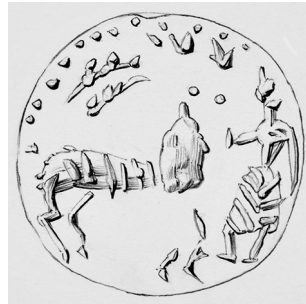
12.94 – Bird Lady
(X 270/LM II-LM IIIA1)



12.95 – Bird Lady?
(VS 3 31a/LM IIIA1-LM IIIA2)



12.96 – Agrimi Lady
(VS 1B 261/LM IIIA1-LM IIIA2)



12.97 – Agrimi Lady
(VI 328/LM IIIA1-LM IIIA2?)



12.98 – Agrimi Lady
(VI 331/LM IIIA1-LM IIIA2)

VIP Mistresses

VIP Mistress of Animals – *Minoan High Art*

Griffin Mistress, Lion Mistress, Hound Mistress – *Minoan High Art*



12.99 – Griffin Mistress
(VI 317/LB I-LB II)



12.100 – Griffin Mistress
(II.3 276/LB I-LB II)



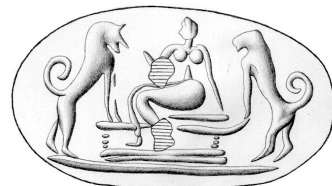
12.101 – Griffin Mistress
(VI 314/LB I-LB II)



12.102 – Lion Mistress
(VI 315/LM I-LM II)



12.103 – Lion Mistress
(IV 295/LM I)



12.104 – Lion Mistress
(VS1B 195/LM I-LM II)

The Great Gods

VIP Mistress of Animals – *Minoan High Art (cont.)*

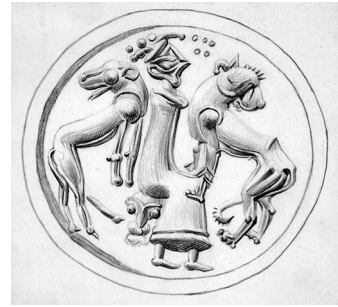
Griffin Mistress, Lion Mistress, Hound Mistress – *Minoan High Art (cont.)*



12.105 – Lion Mistress
(I 145/LB I-LB II)



12.106 – Lion Mistress
(X 242/LB I-LB II)

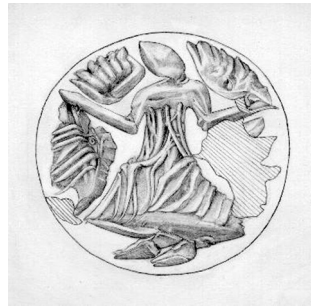


12.107 – Lion Hound Mistress
(VII 118/LB I-LB II)

Bird Mistress, Dolphin Mistress – *Minoan High Art*



12.108 – Bird Mistress
(VII 134/LB I-LB II)



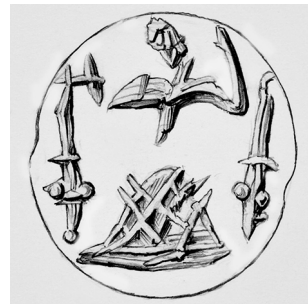
12.109 – Bird Mistress
(II.3 72/LM I)



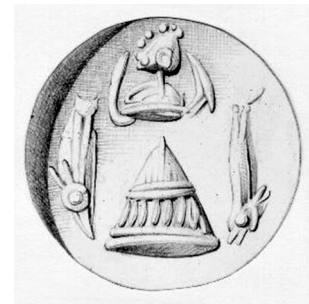
12.110 – Bird Mistress
(I 233b/LB I-LB II)



12.111 – Bird Mistress
(IX 154/LB I-LB II)



12.112 – Dolphin Mistress
(VI 333/LM I)



12.113 – Dolphin Mistress
(II.3 327/LM I)

VIP Mistress of Animals – *Legacy Period*



12.114 – Griffin Mistress
(V 654/LB II-LB IIIA1)

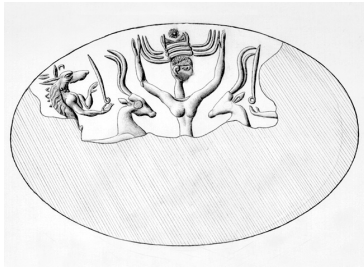


12.115 – Griffin Mistress
(II.3 63/LB II-LB IIIA1)

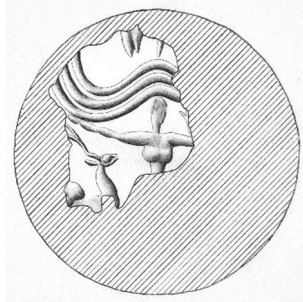


12.116 – Lion Mistress
(I 374/LB II)

VIP Mistress of Animals – Legacy Period (cont.)



12.117 – Bull Mistress
(I 379/LB II-LB IIIA)

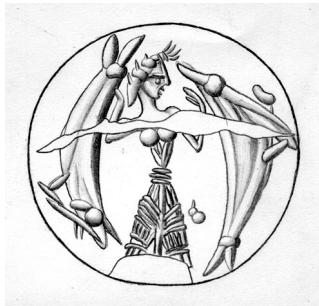


12.118 – Agrimi Mistress
(II.8 255/LM II-LM IIIA1?)



12.119 – Hound Mistress
(II.8 254/LM IIIA1)

**VIP Mistress with Animal –
Minoan High Art**



12.120 – Dolphin Mistress
(VS 1B 116/LB II-LB IIIA1)



12.121 – Agrimi Mistress
(II.4 111/LM I)



12.122 – Agrimi Mistress
(II.7 23/LM I)



12.123 – Agrimi Mistress
(VS 1A 130/LM I)



12.124 – Ram Mistress
(VS 3 38/LM I)



12.125 – Ram Mistress
(I 221/LB I-LB II)

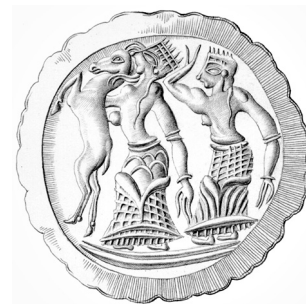
**VIP Mistress with Animal –
Legacy Period**



12.126 – Ram Mistress
(XII 239/LM I-LM II)



12.127 – Ram Mistress
(VS 1A 369/LM I)

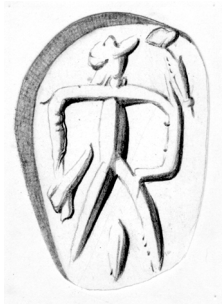


12.128 – Ram Mistress
(I 220/LB II)

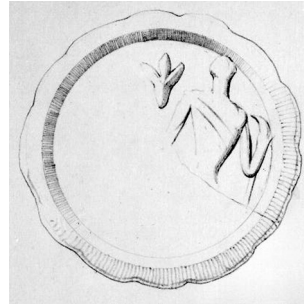
Presenting the Lords and Masters

VIP Lords

VIP Lords – *Early Seal Period*



12.129 – Sword Lord
(II.1 365/MM I?)



12.130 – Triple Bud Rod Lord
(II.5 325/EM III-MM IA?)



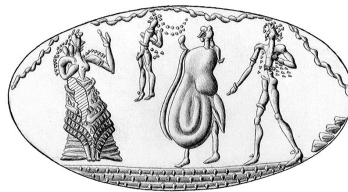
12.131 – Lord
(XII D11b /MM I-MM II)

VIP Lords – *Minoan High Art*

Mighty Lord, Epiphany Lord – *Minoan High Art*



12.132 – Mighty Lord, Staff Lord
(VS 1A 142/LM I)



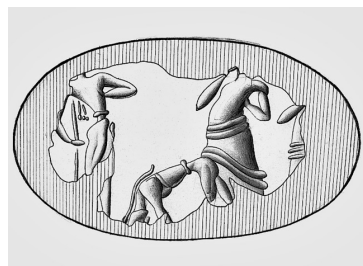
12.133 – Mighty Lord, Epiphany Lord
(VS 2 106/LM I)



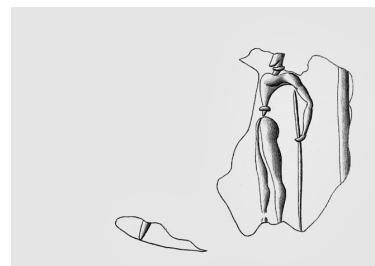
12.134 – Epiphany Lord, Staff Lord,
Mighty Lord (VI 281/LM I)



12.135 – Mighty Lord
(Poros Ring/LM I)



12.136 – Mighty Lord, Staff Lord
(II.7 3/LM I)

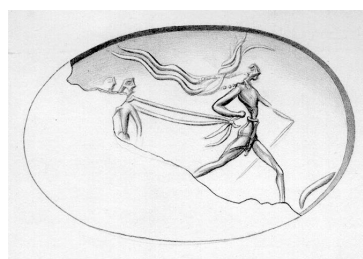


12.137 – Staff Lord
(II.7 4/LM I)

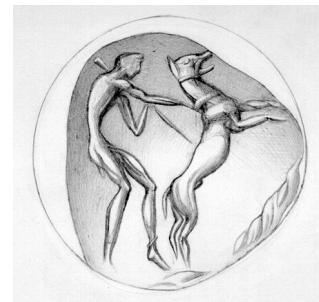
Staff Lord, Bow Lord, Sword Lord, Axe Lord, Mace Lord – *Minoan High Art*



12.138 – Staff Lord, Lion Lord
(II.8 237/LM I)

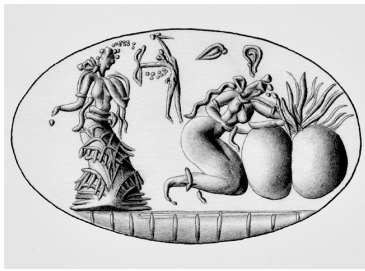


12.139 – Staff Lord
(VS 1A 133/LM I)



12.140 – Staff Lord, Hound Lord
(VS 1A 174/LM I)

Staff Lord, Bow Lord, Sword Lord, Axe Lord, Mace Lord – *Minoan High Art (cont.)*



12.141 – Epiphany Lord, Bow Lord, Sword Lord (VI 278/LM I)



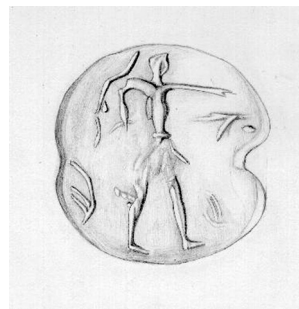
12.142 – Bow Lord, Lion Lord (II.6 36/LM I)



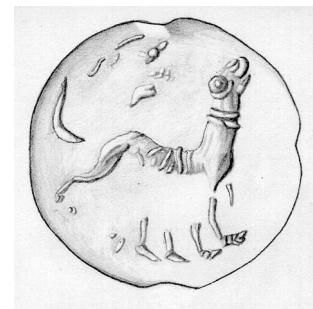
12.143 – Bow Lord (II.6 21/LM I)



12.144 – Bow Lord, Hound Lord (X 161/LM I)



12.145 – Bow Lord (II.3 330b/LM I?)



12.146 – Bow Lord, Hound Lord (VS 1A 119/LM I)



12.147 – Sword Lord, Lion Lord (IX 114/LM I)

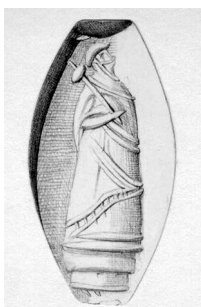


12.148 – Axe Lord (II.3 198/LM I)

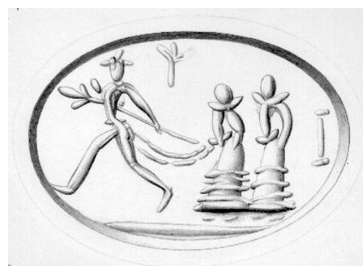


12.149 – Axe Lord (I 225/LB I-LB II)

Triple Bud Rod Lord – *Minoan High Art*



12.150 – Mace Lord (II.3 147/LB I)



12.151 – Triple Bud Rod Lord (V 173/LH I-LH II)



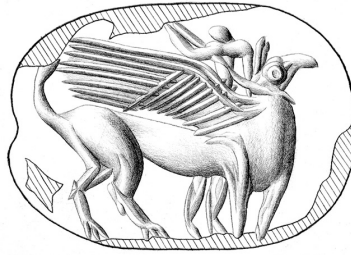
12.152 – Triple Bud Rod Lord (III 357/LM I)

The Great Gods

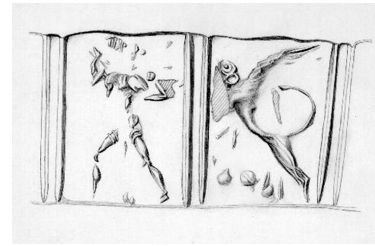
Griffin Lord – *Minoan High Art*



12.153 – Griffin Lord
(I 223/LB I-LB II)



12.154 – Griffin Lord
(VS 3 245a/LB I-LB II)



12.155 – Griffin Lord
(II.3 328/LM I)



12.156 – Griffin Lord
(II.8 193/LM I)



12.157 – Griffin Lord
(VI 321/LM I-LM II)



12.158 – Griffin Lord
(II.6 29/LM I)

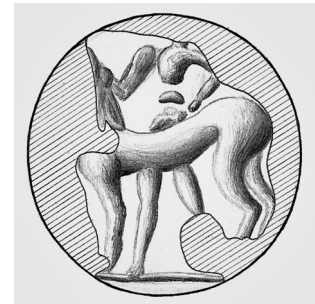
Lion Lord – *Minoan High Art*



12.159 – Lion Lord
(XII 207/LM I-LM II)



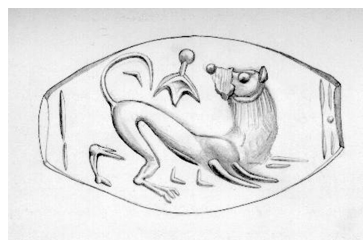
12.160 – Lion Lord
(II.3 24/LB I-LB II)



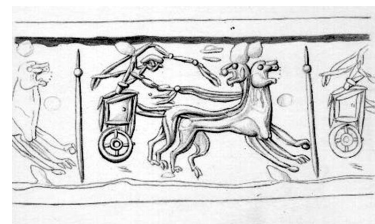
12.161 – Lion Lord
(II.7 27/LM I)



12.162 – Lion Lord
(II.3 27/LB I-LB II)



12.163 – Lion Lord
(II.3 329/LB I-LB II)



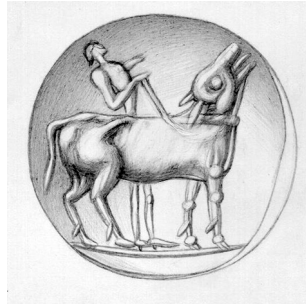
12.164 – Lion Lord
(V 585/LB I-LB II)

The Great Gods

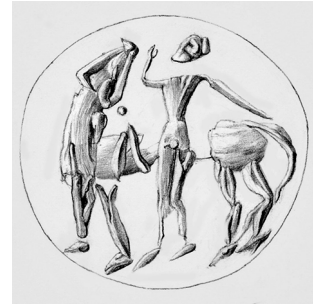
Bull Lord – Minoan High Art



12.165 – Bull Lord
(VII 102/LB I-LB II)



12.166 – Bull Lord
(VS 1A 173/LM I)



12.167 – Bull Lord
(VI 326/LM I-LM II)

Agrimi Lord – Minoan High Art



12.168 – Bull Lord
(VS 1B 61/LB I-LB II)



12.169 – Agrimi Lord
(VS 1B 88/LB I-LB II)



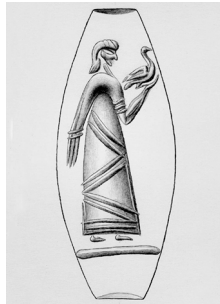
12.170 – Hound Lord
(II.8 236/MM III-LM I)

Hound Lord – Minoan High Art



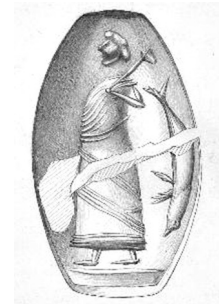
12.171 – Hound Lord
(VI 325/LB I-LB II)

Bird? Lord – Minoan High Art



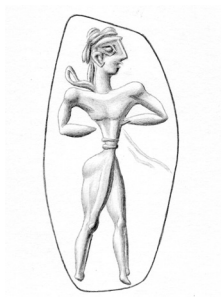
12.172 – Bird? Lord
(VI 318/LB I-LB II)

Dolphin Lord – Minoan High Art



12.173 – Dolphin Lord, Mace Lord
(II.8 258/LM I)

VIP Lords – Legacy Period



12.174 – Mighty Lord
(I 68/LB II)



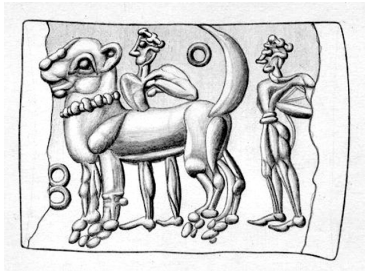
12.175 – Mighty Lord
(V 201/LH II-LH IIIA1)



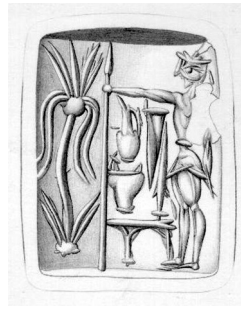
12.176 – Mighty Lord, Epiphany Lord
(I 292/LB IIIA1?)

The Great Gods

VIP Lords – Legacy Period (*cont.*)



12.177 – Mighty Lord, Hound Lord
(II.3 52/LB II-LB IIIA1)



12.178 – Staff Lord
(V 608/LM IIIA1-LM IIIA2)



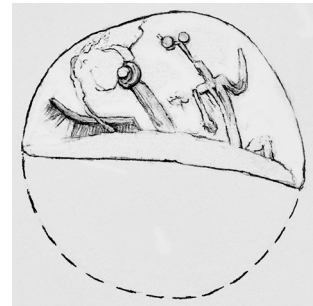
12.179 – Triple Bud Rod Lord
(VS 1B 187/LB IIIA1-LB IIIA2)



12.180 – Griffin Lord
(VS 1B 137/LB II-LB IIIA1)



12.181 – Griffin Lord
(I 285/LB II-LB IIIA1)



12.182 – Griffin Lord
(VI 332/LM IIIA1-LM IIIA2?)



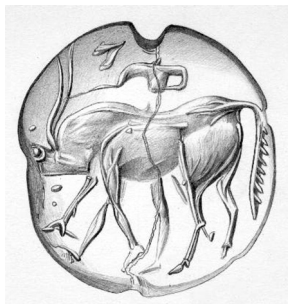
12.183 – Lion Lord
(I 512/LB II-LB IIIA1)



12.184 – Lion Lord
(I 133/LB II-LB IIIA1)



12.185 – Lion Lord
(X 135/LB II-LB IIIA1)



12.186 – Bull Lord
(X 259/LM II-LM IIIA1)



12.187 – Agrimi Lord
(VI 285/LB II-LB IIIA1)



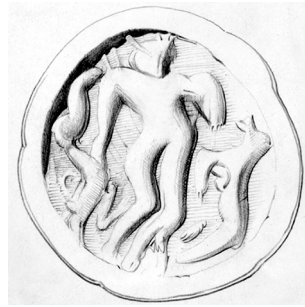
12.188 – Agrimi Lord
(I 199/LB IIIA1-LB IIIA2)

VIP Masters

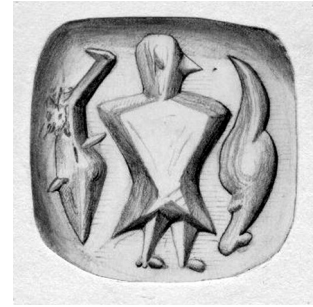
VIP Master of Animals – *Early Seal Period*



12.189 – Lion Master
(II.1 442b/EM III-MM IA)



12.190 – Hound Master
(II.1 469/EM III-MM IA)

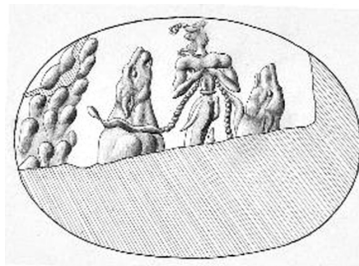


12.191 – Dolphin Master
(II.2 267b/MM II)

VIP Master of Animals – *Minoan High Art*



12.192 – Griffin Lion Master
(II.3 167/LM I-LM II)



12.193 – Hound Master
(II.8 248/LM I)

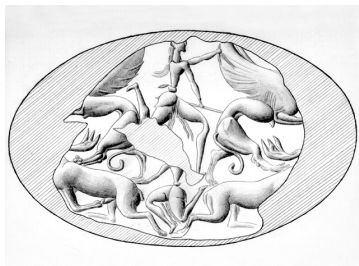


12.194 – Hound Master
(VS 1B 62/LB I-LB II)

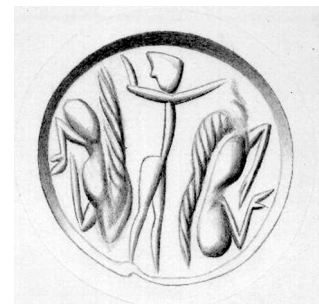
VIP Master of Animals – *Legacy Period*



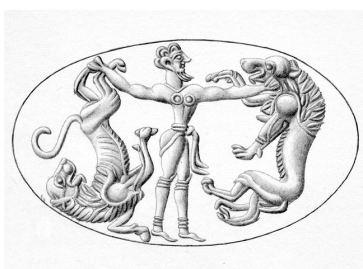
12.195 – Genius Master
(XI 36/LB II-LB IIIA1)



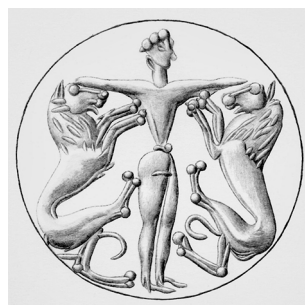
12.196 – Griffin Master, Stag Master
(I 324/LB II-LB IIIA1)



12.197 – Griffin Master
(V 669/LB IIIA1-LB IIIA2)



12.198 – Lion Master
(I 89/LB II)



12.199 – Lion Master
(VI 312/LB II-LB IIIA1)



12.200 – Lion Master
(VI 313/LB II-LB IIIA1)

VIP Master of Animals – Legacy Period (cont.)



12.201 – Lion Master
(III 361/LM II-LM IIIA1)



12.202 – Lion Master
(VS 2 113/LB II-LB IIIA1)



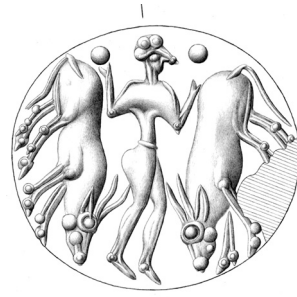
12.203 – Lion Master
(XI 301/LB II-LB IIIA1)



12.204 – Lion Master
(II.8 250/LM IIIA1)



12.205 – Lion Master
(XI 257/LB IIIA1)



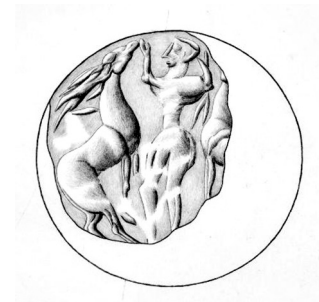
12.206 – Bull Master
(VIII 147/LB IIIA1)



12.207 – Agrimi Master
(I 163/LB IIIA1-LB IIIA2)



12.208 – Agrimi Master
(IV D38/LB IIIA1)



12.209 – Stag Master
(V 594/LB II-LB IIIA1?)



12.210 – Hound Master
(II.3 193/LB IIIA1-LB IIIA2)



12.211 – Hound Master
(II.8 253/LM IIIA1?)



12.212 – Dolphin Master
(V 181/LB II?)

PART 3

UNDERSTANDING THE AEGEAN WORLD

Chapter 13 Minoan Identity and the Seal Artist

In Chapters 4 to 12 we have examined in detail the various aspects of Minoan and Mycenaean life as presented to us by the seal artists across the centuries. In the Iconographic Interpretation section which concluded each of these Chapters we concentrated on the Minoan experience down to the end of Minoan High Art. It is now time to gather these separate strands and peer into the Minoan mind. There are many ways to look at an ancient civilisation including the excavation of their buildings and artefacts and translation of their texts and their art. We know that we cannot access the Minoan texts but much has been revealed of the society through excavation. Yet perhaps the most revealing material is the art. It is important to remember that the images are doubly precious because they are the ones that the Minoans themselves chose in order to depict their world as lived experience and as supernatural engagement. The illustrations of the seal images in this Chapter are, for the most part, in colour and recall the seal images presented above. Thus, they provide a visual summary of the findings of these earlier Chapters¹.

Living in the Real World (Plates 13.1 to 13.24)

Crete is a natural world of amazing beauty and variety – even more so thousands of years ago when the mountains were covered by great forests and the seas were clean and teeming with fish. It may be hard for us to appreciate fully the primal beauty of this island as we view it from a modern-day perspective but we needs must try if we are to read the seal images of three or four thousand years ago. Over the centuries man has had a deleterious effect on the land through engaging in practices ranging from overgrazing with goat herds to cutting timber to build Venetian war fleets. It is true that much has been accomplished in re-habilitating denuded slopes and replanting vegetation so that the landscape looks refreshed compared with the scenes in the photographs of the early excavations last century. However, we are looking into the long past and trying to see vast forests clothing all the mountain ranges in a vibrant green canopy that protected the wildlife, where mountain tops were covered each year in deep snow that fed the streams in narrow gorges and where a human might explore in wonder at the grandeur all around. From almost any vantage point in the mountains a human could see the sea wrapping its watery protection around the land. A wonderful view of the real world has been encapsulated in the seal images. There are stones underfoot and waves to buoy up ships, the sun and moon, all manner of flowers and trees, wild and domesticated animals and the products of human-made crafts, all depicted with such care that they are palpable.

In 13.1 the rocky ground is shown as separate round stones providing the backdrop to a reclining hound. In 13.2 the waves of the sea are presented as a running spiral, in 13.49 as a waveline against a ship hull and in 13.43 as the sea surface in the tricurved arch pattern. In 13.3 an agrimi rests beside a waveline stream flowing below a rocky mountain. Celestial bodies, sun and moon, are displayed. In 13.50 the sun is shown in characteristic shape as a sunburst shining over a cultscape while in 13.37 there is a skyline, the only one of the four celestial signs that is an artificial construct. Images 13.4 to 13.6 remind us that flowers and leaves were the first plant images. The Early Seals are resplendent with

¹ The original seals, signets and sealings, illustrated in colour in this Chapter, have all been discussed in the appropriate Chapters above where they were illustrated as the black and white drawings of the seal impressions.

floral and foliate shapes and speak of the underlying geometric structure of all life forms. As discussed above in Chapters 2 and 5, a deep understanding of geometry is displayed and celebrated in these early designs and, while it is muted in the later seal designs, it is never lost to the wider art². Floral and foliate elements remain strong in the iconographic repertoire to the end even as they are joined by larger bushes and trees. Flowers start as the presentation of significant shapes like the rosette of 13.4 and the lily triple bud of 13.5 and morph into their more naturalistic depiction in gardens like the lilies in 13.6. The floral sequence brings into view the whole array of indigenous flora that can delight a human seeing flowers on open paths and in rocky crevices and gathering them to smell the perfume or carry to a shrine. This wondrous endemic landscape is named here the Lily Garden³.

The forest shelters wild animals like the agrimi, stag, boar and birds who fly freely by while the sea has wonderful creatures of its own. In the early seals the agrimi and the stag are shown as sizeable beasts with great horns and antlers, bespeaking their strength and virility. Later, these characteristic features are shown in even greater detail in the grand statant and couchant poses of the sole subject images. Then the speed of the animal comes to be stressed through action poses like the flying gallop, flying leap and reverse twist. The boar is different. Not as fleet of foot as the agrimi and the stag, it is presented as a beast of formidable size and strength with razor-sharp tusks. The fertility of these animals is celebrated in mating scenes like 13.58, in suckling/caring scenes as in 13.7 or with the endowments of the sows as in 13.8. In the predation scene of 13.9 the agrimi is the quarry of the hound. Sea creatures are well-represented with much care given to their species shape and fluid movement, from dolphins and fish to molluscs and crustaceans like the crab in 13.12. Their aggression is also recorded from the whirl of dolphins hunting in 13.10 to the great fish capturing an octopus in a detailed seascape in 13.11. This primal enveloping beauty of land and sea impressed the early Minoans so much that their artists came to present the wild natural world around as a beautiful garden bursting with life and a bountiful sea full of pattern and movement. This is the natural world that the people of Crete perceived as a sacred surround sustaining them in their daily lives.

The other half of the Minoan consciousness of the real world is their life in their domestic surroundings and so the nurture of domestic animals is also featured in the art. The trusty hound companion is never absent from the iconographic repertoire, either being shown by itself as in 13.1, posed beside its master in 13.13 or in action in hunting scenes. Herders tend animals in 13.14 and 13.15. Cattle and sheep are regularly given sole subject status in the focus composition in statant and couchant poses, with bulls and rams being favourites. The theme of fecundity is explored through the *Icons* of mating, suckling and caring for young. Cows and bitches are shown as suckling mothers of great tenderness. The theme of predation is explored where domestic animals are often the victim in the *Icons* of stalking, chasing, holding at bay, crunching, seizing, carrying the catch and feeding on the catch. When wounded, the suffering of the animal victim is shown with sensitivity in contorted pose and open mouth. In all, the representations of domestic animals complements those of the wild natural world to make animals the most frequently depicted subject matter in seal images.

The constructed environment is presented in many ways. At the time of the building of the first palaces the activity of humans begins to be a major theme. In MM II the prism images are full of men with their tools of trade, as with the potter beside his pots, the porter carrying loads attached to a carrying pole in 13.13 and the herder minding his sheep behind wickerwork barriers in 13.14. Very early, the ship is the featured large-scale construction as in 13.16. The whole assemblage of these images of busy people is a celebration of the great achievements of building the first palaces and organising their society. Then,

2 Being widely used in ivory carving, metal work, jewellery and fresco borders. Then there is the exceptional effect of the fresco in geometric design on the walls of the whole upper room of Xeste 3, illustrated Vlacopoulos CANP, Fig. 28. He sees this chromatic giant geometry as representing the metaphysical world, Vlacopoulos 2016a, 365-385.

3 I see the summation inherent in this name as paralleling Andreas Vlacopoulos' description of the nature surrounding the figures in the frescoes of the lower floors of Xeste 3, which he termed "physis".

in Minoan High Art, the emphasis changes, with the depictions of workers in daily life largely giving way to presenting the finished product. Major constructions requiring the labour of many workers are depicted. Ships are shown with ever more detail. Buildings are seen in the landscapes, townscapes and cultscapes, as with the town houses in 13.17 and the shrine built securely on rocky ground in 13.18. The depiction of ships and buildings in increasing numbers suggests pride in the accomplishments of working together on large projects. However, the palaces themselves are never the main subject, nor are their interiors featured – a significant omission, one would have thought, at the time when the great second palaces were at their most splendid. Of the minor constructions, there are some stools, chairs and cushions, mostly associated with the Seated Lady, but altars are given considerable attention, as with the sacrifice altar in 13.64 and the table altar in 13.65. The presentation of clothing, often with exquisite detailing of the fabric, is a *tour de force* of the artists. The long pants with neat hemline of 13.19, the fringed skirts and cape of 13.20, the elaborate flounced skirt of 13.21, the tassel on the high hat and banded long kilt of 13.22 and the fringed cloak of 13.24 are but a few examples. For each garment the weight and weave are carefully delineated – lightweight or even diaphanous for the pants, heavy and falling straight for the fringed skirts, and with a variety of textured panels in the flounced skirt, while the cloak is of heavy weave with complicated patterning and deep fringe, its heavy folds capable of enveloping the warrior in protective folds. The soft substance of the fabrics is to be contrasted with the other surfaces seen in the accoutrements for war in 13.23 and 13.24. Here the swelling shape of the eight shield, the sharp spear and crested helmet and the bulbous modelling of the hide apron evoke the different effects of metal, boar tusk and hide and leather. As we gather the examples of human-made items it becomes quite clear that it is the finished product that is presented for display and admiration. Little effort is expended by the seal artist on the labours that have produced these fine results. There are no women spinning or weaving at the loom, no smiths working with their tools, no carpenters or masons actually building ships and shrines. Rendering the variations in shape, size, weight, texture, pattern, surface and shine in their products is how the artist testifies to the skill required to create such intricate pieces and how the artist celebrates the industrious and innovative artisan.

Manifesting the Supernatural World (Plates 13.25 to 13.48)

Parallel to the real world is the supernatural world, its characteristics delineated in bold clarity. This, too, is conceived of as a garden which is here termed the Papyrus Garden. Plants from far lands create a landscape where exotic and fantastic creatures roam and where even the anthropomorphic Great Gods, serene and powerful, are at home. The supernatural garden begins to take form in the earliest seals where palmette patterns grace the designs as in 13.25, heralding an interest in exotic flora. These palm types are joined by papyrus plants and flowers and, by LM I times, both the palm and the papyrus have become the anchor species for a landscape inhabited, as in 13.26 and 13.27, by dragons and lions. Indeed, an exotic and fantastic bestiary had been evolving since EM III times with the monkey, lion, griffin and dragon depictions and with the genius coming a little later in MM II. Early forms are seen in the monkey-shaped seal in 13.28 and the lions and griffins parading around the perimeter groundline in 13.29 and 13.30. Later forms of the dragon and genius are seen in 13.31 and 13.32. By LM times this group, termed the Fabulous Five, enjoys a wide range of activities and, together with the Papyrus Garden, comes to define the supernatural world.

Yet, there are also home-grown fantastic creatures that have great presence in the iconographic repertoire. Winged human figures, human hybrids and other strange combinations belong to the supernatural realm but seem to exist separately since the artists do not include identifying associations within their focus compositions. Human hybrids personify the enlivening power of the animal depicted. The birdwomen as in 13.34 and the bullmen as in 13.35 are the most striking of the female and male human combinations. Creatures (or part thereof) with frontal faces as in 13.33 appear, while various combinations of animal body parts and inanimate items can also be found, with the outlier Zakro fantasy examples providing their extreme presentations as in 13.36. In naming this iconographic grouping the

Lesser Spirits, we recognise the power of the spirit force that each embodies while allowing that they are of lesser status than the Great Gods.

At the highest level of the supernatural world are the fully anthropomorphic Great Gods. These are identified by specific iconographic criteria and given names appropriate to their presentation. There are forty names listed in the Minoan Pantheon set out in Table 1 of Chapter 12. However, it is likely that these are not separate deities but are the personas of a rather smaller number of deity persons. When the names of the deities are sourced in what they hold or in what activity they perform like the Epiphany Lady in 13.37, the Epiphany Lord in 13.78, the Staff Lady in 13.40 and the Staff Lord in 13.43, we may not be seeing separate deities but simply the recording of their divine ability to perform in these ways. Similarly, the overarching power of the Griffin Lord in 13.46 is declared by his accompanying fantastic creature which can traverse the land and the sky, but his person identity may lie elsewhere. When the Great God personas are known from only a few examples we are prevented from gaining an understanding their true nature, but the Triple Bud Rod Lord as in 13.45 deserves special mention because of his very early appearance. However, there are two areas where the cross-referencing of the attributes recorded in the iconographic detail suggests which of the personas are the main deities: these are the Mistress/Master parallels and the domains of the deity. The parallel presentations of Mistress and Master images are seen as alter egos for the deities' full Lady and Lord presentations and thus are subsumed under those identities. Some deities appear to identify with particular areas of responsibility like the Fertile Earth, the Fecund Marshland, the Wild Mountain and the Deep Ocean. Other deities have particular attributes that set them apart. After this winnowing of personas, a much smaller group emerges to reveal ten principal divine persons. They are the two formidable female powers of the Great Lady as in 13.39 and the Dragon Lady as in 13.41; the "wild" quartet of the Agrimi Lady as in 13.21, the Bow Lady as in 13.38, the Agrimi Lord as in 12.169 and the Bow Lord as in 13.44; the fearsome male forces of the Bull Lord as in 13.47 and the Dolphin Lord as in 13.48; the strong male presence of the Mighty Lord as in 13.43; and the mysterious authority of the Triple Bud Rod Lord as in 13.45. Some of these gods and goddesses display similar characteristics and this may be pointing to their being the same identity or it may be suggesting that they are sibling deities, sisters and brothers who share close interests and roles. Again, the Aegean silence prevents further delineation.

Negotiating the Interface between the Two Worlds (Plates 13.49 to 13.84)

Mortal humans may live in the real world but they are ever aware of the supernatural forces beyond their control. Locating these powerful forces in a supernatural world raises the problem of negotiating the interface between the two worlds. How does a mortal ensure there will be food from bountiful harvests and productive herds? How does one lead a happy healthy life in peace and be victorious in war? Particularly for the Minoan, how does one escape earthquake devastation? The iconographic record suggests that symbol, spirit assistance, ceremony and personal relationship with the Great Gods was their answer.

Symbols of the Earth and Sky and Flora and Fauna

Potent symbols of nature are created to remind people of the sacred other. The first are the symbols of the earth, water and sky: rocky ground, boulder, waveline, sunburst, moon disk, moon crescent and skyline. Rocky ground is shown as individual stones as in 13.1 or assembled to provide the secure base for a shrine as in 13.6 and 13.18, its ubiquity masking the fact that it is used symbolically to state the sustaining power of the earth. This symbolism is clearest when it is the nurturing base of the primary symbol of vegetative fecundity, the tree growing from rocky ground as in 13.76 and 13.84. For the watery realms, the waveline is the strong symbol, denoting the moving power of the sea waves as they dash against ship hulls as in 13.49. The edge of the marshlands is also shown as a waveline in 13.26 while the wateredge marks the shallow seashore in 13.43. For the sky, the great symbol is the sunburst presenting the light and warmth of the sun and encoding the changes of the seasons as the sun moves

from mid-winter to mid-summer and back again. The sunburst symbol shines over scenes of human activity as in 13.3 and 13.50 but can also indicate a supernatural role for spirit hybrids and dragons. All these symbols declare the earth and sky as a sacred surround for human life.

The flora and fauna repertoire also provides many symbols. The lily flower and triple bud, the branch and the tree growing from rocky ground are potent vegetative symbols. The love of floral patterns, especially when joined with spiral elements, remains in the art. The triple bud as seen in 13.5 and 13.51 regularly forms the core of the design and is the lasting statement of bursting plant life for over a thousand years. Bull heads bespeak of the life force of the animal while the animal with plant motif reminds of the symbiotic relationship with all animals and their plant-based food. The triton speaks of the sea. Then there are the symbols of the supernatural world, the palm and the papyrus flower. The papyrus encapsulates the Papyrus Garden which is the evocation of the supernatural world while the lily encapsulates the Lily Garden which is the evocation of the natural world.

Symbols from the Constructed Environment

By the time of Minoan High Art various human-made items become sacred symbols. The staff is the symbol of authority held out in the power gesture by both goddesses and gods as in 13.40 and 13.43. The grand pillar as in 13.54 and 13.56 embodies the structural integrity of the great buildings which must be built to withstand earthquakes. Double horns, with their significant astronomical connections, mark the sanctity of shrine and palace alike as in 13.6, 13.43, 13.77 and 13.80. The twelve special objects comprise certain familiar items which come to hold symbolic significance because they are used apart from their primary context to draw attention to activities considered of religious import. Ten of the twelve are artefacts from the range of war and cult equipment: the double axe as in 13.57, eight shield, helmet, panoply and cloak knot as in 13.56, and the horn bow, scarf knot, orb rod, ewer and vase as in 13.55. Only the triton and the triple bud rod come from the world of nature. The double axe and triple bud find an even more elevated role within the group of eight hovering symbols known in Minoan High Art which are found superimposed across the top of some cultscapes: the eye and ear as in 13.78, the rhyton (piriformshape), ear of grain (grainshape), the double axe with scarf as in 13.52, the grand pillar (pillarshape), curlshape and triple bud rod. For some, their importance is underlined by their being given sole subject status in a seal design, as with the eye and ear in 8.175 and the double axe with scarf in 13.53. When used in cultscapes, these symbols are not an integral part of the scene of human activity but are, in fact, artificial constructs placed by the artists to hover above as in 13.37, 13.52 and 13.54. They may be read as the manifestation of prayers crossing the interface of the two worlds to appeal to the deities being worshipped.

Animal Power and Spirit Assistance

There are also intimations of the crossing from the supernatural world into the real world in the characteristic behaviour of endemic animal life. Birds and butterflies, through their capacity for flight, act as messengers of the gods to humans, as seen in the boulder kneeling scenes as in 13.62 and 13.68. The importance of this interface role is no doubt one of the reasons that birds and butterflies are granted sole subject status and featured in the focus composition as in 13.61, 6.150 and 6.166 to 6.170. The bee, too, can fly but it is its production of honey that it is seen as bringing a gift of the gods to humans. When the bee is first depicted it is shown in profile with its six legs reduced to two hardworking arms and hands as in 6.139 to 6.141 – all the better to make the precious honey. Later, singular importance is given to the *Icon* of beehive with bees by placing it in the left curve of the bezel in cultscapes where it is linked to the important symbols of the tree growing from rocky ground and the ceremony of pulling the tree with its significance for pollination. Then there is the exploration of predatory animal behaviour. The bird, dolphin, octopus, triton and hound hold in common their role as predators. Sea birds dive on fish and jellyfish, dolphins chase fish into a bait ball, the octopus is paired with sea urchins and the triton is shown with radula extended. Then there is the trusty hound, the companion of man, his assistant and protector in the hunt. In all manner of poses the hound is shown to attack the bull, agrimi, stag and

boar. This predatory behaviour may not at first be very explicit in its message of help from the gods but its import becomes clearer when the predatory activities of the lion and griffin are considered. These fabulous creatures hunt for their prey of agrimi, stag and bull, with their success recorded in violent and terrifying images. They have crossed from the supernatural world to hunt the animals of the endemic world and their success is celebrated. The human hunter is also a predator. He can act at a human level but, with the intervention of the fabulous predators, he can see his role as emulating them and calling on their help in the hunt. The celebration of the success of the fabulous predators raises the human hunter up to spiritual levels and grants him success, a success linked to the divine hunters, the Bow Lady and Bow Lord.

The animal world provides a special case of assigning symbolic use to a much-depicted element. The Wild Agrimi, Leaping Dolphin, Messenger Bird and Faithful Hound are in a class of their own as Signature Animals representing their natural habitat or their sphere of activity. The agrimi and dolphin are among the first motifs to appear in the seal images. They develop their presence as their physical details and life activities later become ever more lovingly shown. The agrimi, as in 13.58 and in its various depictions, conjures up the life of the mountain and forest as it intersects with the activities of man to become quarry in the hunt. Its beauty, speed and agility inspire the artist to make it the symbolic statement of the wild power of the forest animals. The dolphin as in 13.59 is the spirit of the open ocean. It dives down to deep grottoes, it is at home in surface waves, and it accompanies ships on their human journeys. The bird as in 13.61 becomes a favourite in Minoan High Art, with many species depicted. In full flight it carries items in its beak and is the messenger of the gods, giving warning to the boulder kneeler as in 13.68. The hound as in 13.1 is one of the earliest images. It regularly wears a collar as in 13.60 to show its link to its master and accompanies him on hunting exploits where danger is ever-present, while its life cycle is recorded in many a tender vignette. Its faithful attendance signifies the great bond between owner and animal. Each of the signature animals is the symbol of their rich life in their home environment. Their animal power is raised to the spirit level as each becomes the familiar of a deity and so names their persona. Thus, we have an Agrimi Lady and an Agrimi Lord, a Dolphin Lady and a Dolphin Lord, a Bird Lady and a Hound Lady and a Hound Lord.

The immanence of the supernatural powers in all animal life is clearly declared in the bold *Icons* presented in the compositional device of the antithetical group, the images of the Mistress of Animals and the Master of Animals. The Mistress nourishes/controls the griffin, lion, hound, agrimi, ram, dolphin and bird as her attendants. The Master controls the griffin, lion, hound and dolphin as his attendants. These Mistress and Master antithetical groups are codified forms of the Ladies and Lords of the Minoan Pantheon. The identifying familiars of the main deity persons are closely correlated with the Mistress and Master animal attendants. Thus we have the Griffin, Lion, Hound, Agrimi, Dolphin and Bird Lady and the Griffin, Lion, Hound, Agrimi and Dolphin Lord. That both endemic animals and fabulous creatures can represent the characteristics of the gods blurs the interface between the real world and the supernatural world. It melds the two worlds, allowing the human psyche to be present in both, enjoying god-granted prosperity and success.

The prevalence of depictions of human hybrids and other composite creatures reveals another layer of experience with supernatural forces. With the creation of hybrid humans, frontal faces and combination creatures, the Minoan artist's imagination gives form to various supernatural forces that can shape human lives. Yet, determining just what forces are represented and how they can assist humans is not made clear in the iconographic detail since these images are handled as sole subjects in the focus design concept. With no accompanying elements depicted and no illustrations of interaction with human beings provided, there is no sure way of unlocking their meaning. We may surmise that the birdwomen taking flight as in 13.34 are spirit helpers to young women, that the bullmen somersaulting as in 13.35 signify the power of the Bull Lord helping athletic men in the bull sports or that the frightful frontal stares as in 13.33 are malevolent and need apotropaic countering but these interpretations are not necessarily certain in the Minoan context. The Zakro fantasy creations are a special case of composites although they do use all the regular motifs from mainstream Minoan iconography. Various explicit images of the female body as

in 13.36 may be summoning help in childbirth and lactation but we do not have the key to unlock the particular reference. How these Lesser Spirits help the Minoan mortal access the supernatural remains, at present, an unknown, as is the reason for their images being placed only on seals.

There are, however, some composite and exotic creatures whose actions do help humans, and these are four members of the Fabulous Five. The dragon carries the Great Lady and does not seem to have a special role in relation to humans. However, the monkey, genius, lion and griffin lead active lives of great import for mortals. The monkey, raised to a spiritual level by its exoticism and ability to act like a human or an anthropomorphic god, leads servers, usually women, into the presence of the Great Lady as in 13.54. With this one action it crosses the interface of the two worlds and brings mortals with it. The genius has always looked benevolent in his primary role of holding the (water) vase as in 13.32 but later it is seen protecting a warrior as in 10.140. Then there is the image where a genius is the substitute for a human hunter – and a very successful one at that. It spears a great bull in 13.61, its action surely a prediction of the success of human hunters who perform likewise. The lion has two roles in relation to humans, both as the great predator of animals and as the quarry for the bravest hunter. Remembering that there are no lions in Crete, we are forced to view the lion as a fabulous beast of great size and ferocity. The fact that it is shown attacking endemic animals like the agrimi and the stag, as well as succumbing to human hunters, reveals that it is a creature which can cross the divide between the two worlds and bring its power to humans. The arch-predator is the griffin. This fabulous beast can attack stags and agrimia and even lions, its overwhelming ferocity expressed in flying gallop and outstretched wing. Again, a supernatural creature is seen crossing into the real world to dispatch an endemic animal in a potent statement of the successful hunter, an image created both to inspire the human hunter and to predict his success.

Ceremony

Whatever ceremonies might have been performed in Minoan Crete, the seal artist has concentrated on presenting nine: processing, serving at the shrine, serving at the altar, animal sacrifice, pulling the tree, kneeling the boulder, presenting the cloak, leaping the bull and marriage. In Minoan High Art, these depictions show women and men in particular places in their own real world performing specific acts, often using specific gestures. Almost all ceremonies are shown as cultscapes which thus surround the officiating humans with symbols of sanctity. Most ceremonies are located outdoors with the rocky ground underfoot and trees and flowers surrounding the officiants. Some ceremonies are shown in the focus design concept, with no location identified, and thus their performance exists beyond time and place. For each ceremony the mortals have a particular aim in mind.

The first four ceremonies are to some extent generic in nature, involving women and/or men, and apparently are regularly performed. Processing may precede, and so be part of, the other specific ceremonies. Seen as the women in file in the *Icon* processing as in 13.64, this image recalls the people's regular participation in processions for each religious celebration. The use of the human pair *Icon* should also be noted here as likely also to represent a procession with the participants proceeding two abreast, allowing that the space constraints of the seal face have reduced the procession to a featuring of the pair component. Two generic scenes of worship are presented in the *Icons* serving at the altar as in 13.65 and serving at the shrine as in 13.66. In these ceremonies the server officiating is almost always a woman. Certain gestures are used like the hands high, forehead and heart gestures. The ceremony of animal sacrifice is depicted throughout all Periods. At first, young quadrupeds are shown with trussed crossed legs, creating the *Icon* of animal sacrificed as in 6.181 to 6.190. Later, full sacrifice scenes are recorded with adult animals on the sacrifice altar and men officiating as in 6.191 and 6.192.

The specific nature of the next four ceremonies marks them out as of great import. The pulling the tree and kneeling the boulder *Icons* as seen in 13.52, 13.68 and 13.62 call on the supernatural powers to assure the spring fecundity of plant life and to preserve the populace from seismic devastation. The ceremony of presenting the cloak turns to the male sphere of activity to celebrate the prowess of the hunter/warrior. Men in these cloaks are shown in the early seal images as in 8.99, with the icon of

presenting the cloak beginning with 13.67 and seen in 8.184 to 8.192. The involvement of other warrior/hunters in the ceremony declares the wider public interest because they are acknowledging the recipient's accession to senior status which henceforth will be recognised by the whole community in the wearing of the prized cloak. The elevated symbolism of the cloak bids us to assess these images as a call to the gods for blessing and protection at the hunter/warrior's promotion to a role of brave leadership. The ceremony of leaping the bull as in 13.69 also reflects the male sphere of courage and skill. The leaper is the officiant in this ceremony when he joins in a dance of death with the bull. The leaper is the representative human worshipping the Bull Lord who manifests his overwhelming power in his bull avatar.

From these high acts of public worship we turn now to focus on particular moments in the private lives of women and men when they act as a couple, usually signified by the heart gesture or by the holding hands gesture. They are shown joining in marriage as in 13.71 with the grainshape hovering symbol spreading its protection over them. They are shown in 13.72 saying their farewells before battle as they both stand looking at his weapons stacked in panoply.

In all the ceremonies, mortals use gestures to mark the significance of the occasion. In the Minoan idiom there are eight such gestures: forehead, heart, shoulder, greeting, hands high, arms high, reaching and holding hands⁴. In 13.70 the processing women give the forehead gesture. In 13.66 and 13.71 women give the heart and shoulder gestures and a man gives the heart gesture. In 13.62 a boulder kneeler gives a greeting gesture to the butterfly. In 13.37 women give the arms high, hands high and forehead gestures. In 13.52 a woman gives the greeting gesture and the reaching gesture. In 13.72 and 13.73 a man and a woman share the holding hands gesture. In these ceremonies the officiants are the people themselves, albeit elite personages within their community. Yet, however elite these women and men may be, they are not given individual identities⁵. They are differentiated from the lowly workers in their society by the beautiful, even intricate, garments they wear. Thus, they appear to be the same as most of the women and men depicted in the seal images of Minoan High Art. As there are no separate figures in special clothing depicted as overseeing or directing the performance of the ritual, there is no evidence here of a priestly class in Minoan society. Without details specifying individual identity, the mortals who perform the ceremonies are acting as representatives of their community. We may term them the Chosen Elite in order to designate their special status. We do not know how they are selected. Perhaps it is through membership of a particular clan or family. Perhaps it is because of some outstanding skill or renowned exploit. It may be by drawing lots. Whatever way they come to their special status, there is no doubt of the importance of their ritual roles. As representative humans, the Chosen Elite are the leaders of their community. They are the ones who make invocations to the gods for blessings through ceremonial actions which coalesce the human world and the supernatural world into one.

Meeting the Great Gods

The most direct manner of communing with the Great Gods is to meet them face to face in a sacred dialogue between mortals and immortals. The seal images show two *Icons* specially created to record these meetings: the VIP appearing on high and the VIP granting audience. In the sacred meeting both deities and mortals use the greeting and hands high gestures while deities alone use the power gesture.

The VIP appearing on high *Icons*, as in 13.73 to 13.78, 13.37 and 13.40 through duality, show that there is no doubt about the majesty of the deity and the lesser stature of the mortal. As the Epiphany Lady or Lord, the deity comes from the supernatural sphere and, although small, hovers in a commanding way over the human who stands below, gesturing appropriately. Special note should be made of the images where the Epiphany deity also appears as the Staff Lady or Staff Lord holding out the staff in the power gesture over the mortal. In 13.40 The Staff Lady presents the staff to a man, while in 13.74 the Staff Lord

4 In the Minoan idiom there are fourteen gestures in total, eight made by mortals and six by deities, with the greeting and hands high gestures shared, as discussed in Chapters 9 and 12 above. The toasting gesture is seen in the Legacy Period and is discussed under 14.56 in Chapter 14 below.

5 See the discussion on the absence of portraiture or individual likenesses in Chapter 3 and Chapter 9 above.

presents the staff to a woman. This is the closest that Minoan iconography comes to an investiture scene where a deity gives a ruler the right to exercise authority on earth. We may be seeing here the appointing of a queen or a king. Again, without accompanying explanation, the exact meaning of these particular cultscapes eludes us, although we can at least say that certain members of the Chosen Elite are favoured by the Great Gods and this is the legitimisation of their status.

The VIP granting audience *Icon* as in 13.79 to 13.84 and 13.54 shows the Great Lady, as Seated Lady, welcoming her mortal servers who stand before her, usually offering gifts. The great gulf between deity and mortal is revealed here by size differential, with the Great Lady shown much larger than her servers, and by her position as the one deity who alone may be seated. However, it is important to stress that the mortal human is nevertheless meeting the deity face to face and that, in their standing and gesturing, they can communicate directly with the powerful supernatural being, perhaps even to speak to her.

In these dramatic presentations of humans negotiating the interface between the two worlds, we see that it is again the Chosen Elite who are the representatives for mortals as each stands before one of the Great Gods, face to face. There is no bowing, no full obeisance, no need of an intermediary deity to bring the human into the divine presence as there is in other contemporary cultures to the east. Who, then, are these humans who can so confidently approach their Great Gods? Just as we saw above with the officiants performing ceremonies, the Chosen Elite who stand before their Great Gods can be viewed as representatives able to speak on behalf of their people. They are the representatives of their community in this sacred dialogue, just as they were when they officiated in ceremonies as processors, servers at altar, shrine and sacrifice, as boulder kneelers and tree pullers, as the cloaked warrior/hunter and the bull leaper. That their chosen representatives can so confidently cross the interface between the two worlds to stand face to face and speak with such powerful supernatural beings reveals a level of pride in how the Minoans viewed themselves.

It should not surprise us that this is the view Minoans had of themselves. They had enjoyed a long domicile in Crete, working the land and building great palaces. Their ordered communal life provided for public and private celebration and disciplined military training. They had survived at least two major earthquakes and the Thera eruption and each time lived to prosper again. Their ships sailed the deep oceans bringing back riches from close settlements and far lands. Some years ago Malcolm Wiener coined the term, “Versailles effect”, to sum up Minoan influence on Aegean settlements. Now, with much more evidence available, he has crafted a masterly synthesis of Minoan power abroad – indeed, a Minoan Thalassocracy⁶. Confident in their presence at home and abroad, the Minoans consistently show in their art that there was a sacred surround for the lives of humans. The land and sea nurtured them, the fertile earth and prolific animal life sustained them, the products of their crafts made life richer in the real world. Yet all the while they were in touch with the supernatural world of spirits, deities and dark forces through symbol and ceremony and through their representative humans communing directly with anthropomorphic gods.

The Minos Ring and the Nestor Ring (Plates 13.85 and 13.86)

The extensive iconographic analysis of Minoan seal images undertaken above brings new insights to the understanding of the images on two of the most discussed gold signet rings – one found at Knossos in Crete and the other near Pylos in mainland Greece – and given the names of the legendary kings of those two realms, Minos and Nestor⁷.

6 See Wiener, MT, 17-25, for tracing the usage of the conical cup and 2016b, 365-378, for the Thalassocracy.

7 The Minos Ring has a curious history of discovery and disappearance. Evans discusses the ring which, to his disappointment, he had failed to acquire, PM IV, 947-957. Pini, 1987, 441-455 and 1989, 1-4, gives detailed explanations. Dimopoulou and Rethemiotakis, RM, 8-28, summarise the history and provide an extensive discussion of the iconography through comparisons with other rings. The Nestor Ring acquired by Evans also has problems with its exact provenance, PM III, 155, 279. See the discussion on the confirmation of the authenticity

The **Minos Ring** in 13.85 is a classic example of the artist selecting elements from the iconographic repertoire and rendering them in pure Minoan idiom. The ring presents a cultscape composed of four *Icons*: two pulling the tree, a VIP appearing on high and a VIP in the grand boat. Having two tree pulling scenes allows both a woman and a man to be represented as the tree puller. Each tree springs from a tree shrine which is built on rocky ground shown as huge boulders. The man holds an ovoid rhyton. The woman tree puller in the right curve of the bezel is balanced in the left curve by the Great Seated Lady who welcomes the Epiphany Lady arriving on high. The seat of the Great Lady is an ashlar shrine capped by double horns which the Lady caresses. The masterful arrangement of these three icons in a curve allows the ingress of the shallow sea on whose tricurved arch patterned surface the Sea Lady steers a grand boat with triple bud prow and dragon head stern carrying a tiered shrine topped by double horns. Other details include the female clothing of flounced skirt and pants with hemline marked, the male clothing of belt and kilt and the elaborate hair styles of all the figures. When all these iconographic details are fully appreciated and when their interrelatedness is fully recognised then the complex scene is seen as a statement of the sacred surround enjoyed by humans. The integration of the real and the supernatural worlds is abundantly clear. Women and men perform their ceremonies to produce bountiful fruiting in a beautiful landscape visited by the Great Gods who benevolently bestow their blessings.

The **Nestor Ring** in 13.86 combines known elements from the Minoan iconographic repertoire and others that do not have parallels. The known elements are women and men in characteristic clothing, gesturing, lion, griffin, dragon, two butterflies as a fluttering pair, two piriform shapes as hovering symbols, and sacrifice and table altars. There are no comparable seal images for other details which include various poses adopted by the women and men, placing the live lion couchant on the sacrifice altar and the griffin sejant on the table altar. Such novel presentations have long caused concern about the authenticity of the ring. However, one motif, the ivy-like cluster of boughs, can now be compared with the boughs springing out of the shrine on the newly-discovered gold signet from the Griffin Warrior Grave as in 14.15, and this is a detail that could not have been known to a forger of earlier times. The division of the seal face into quarters for design purposes is well-attested, beginning with the geometric patterns of the early seals as in 1.54 through to later pictorial subjects as in 6.103 and 6.152. However, this particular quartering of the seal face so as to create four separate complex scenes requires further comment. Since Arthur Evans' first analysis, the divisions have always been read as the branches of a great tree growing up from an earth mound at the base. He even provided a mock-up of the seal design as a wall painting in full colour to make his point. However, the "tree trunk" does not taper to the top and the "boughs" do not taper to their extremities as they would in nature and as one would expect them to be represented at this time of naturalistic portrayal. Moreover, careful inspection of how rocky ground is shaped and modelled and how the wateredge is rendered in the various seal designs points to a new interpretation. It is much more likely that all the divisions here are rocky ground, carefully modelled like those in so many other seals as in 13.17, 13.18, 13.31, 13.41, 13.43 and 13.49. In some cases the rocky ground rises up the side of the image as in 4.17 with the rocky crag, in 4.23 with the rocky headland and in 13.39 with the looping rocks behind the Great Lady. In the Nestor Ring the rocky ground spreads across the lower perimeter, then up and out to provide a base for each of the four complex scenes. If each of these scenes had been created separately for each of four rings there would hardly be any query as to what was subtending the human activity. As for the identity of the little vertical lines rising up into the base rocky ground, there is a parallel in 4.64. In this image a row of little vertical lines is one of the variations of the wateredge seen below the grand boat. If, then, we are to read the base as rocky ground merging into water below, we may be given a clue to the identity of the creature placed there and to the unusual angle of its pose. Arthur Evans always thought it was a Minoan dragon and this new reading of the divisions as rocky ground with a marshy area below makes that identification even more credible. This is the dragon known to frequent watery domains and is in the act of stepping down into its happy

habitat⁸. Reading the divisions as earth forms and the creature below as a dragon immediately calls to mind the power of the Great Lady and the Dragon Lady, although neither is physically depicted here as an anthropomorphic deity. The earth that is regularly shown as the Great Lady's seat is the very substance that supports the human figures and activities above. The fantastic familiar which the Dragon Lady rides side-saddle at other times is placed at an iconographic pivot point to gather the whole composition together. In the Nestor Ring we are again treated to an integrated view of the Minoan universe where mortals live their daily lives and the power of the gods is evidenced all around. The Fertile Earth and Fecund Marshland support and sustain all life. Hovering symbols remind of the supernatural world. Butterflies as a fluttering pair bring messages from that other world and the altars are in place for performing ceremonies of worship. Three of the Fabulous Five, the lion, griffin and dragon, grace the images, their presence at once declaring that the supernatural world is immanent and identifying the gods who have come to the humans' side.

Composition in Minoan Frescoes

Participation in the iconographic repertoire extends across all the art media: ivory carving, gold work, stone relief vases, pottery, fresco and seals. This sharing has been widely acknowledged and is recognised in the term, Aegean koine. The brief list of comparanda provided at the end of each of Chapters 4 to 10 and Chapter 12 references this widespread iconographic interconnectivity across all Aegean art. The terms of the IconAegean Vocabulary developed for the seal images are applicable to all media iconography, including the frescoes. Now, bringing to mind the whole Aegean artistic output, some of which has only relatively recently become available in the sealing images⁹, it is timely to ask what art medium has provided the inspiration for the iconographic repertoire and for the design concepts and compositional devices that shape and present the images. Past analyses have largely sought the inspiration for the creation of the iconography in pottery and fresco. The beautiful designs of Kamares Ware of MM II-MM III have been seen as the source for the decorative use of plant and geometric compositions, while the arresting LM wall paintings have been credited with the creation of figurative scenes which reach out with particular efficacy because of their rendition in colour¹⁰. Yet, the developments in iconographic detail that are observable in the pottery can be found earlier in the prepalatial seals. When the elements in the pottery designs are examined closely it is clear that the floral and spiraliform designs would fit the oval or circle shapes of a seal face, an indication of where they were developed. As far as comparing the frescoes is concerned, the first thing to do is to pay careful attention to their date. Many of the pieces regularly presented as characteristic of Minoan art are, in fact, post the LM IB destructions and thus not really part of Minoan High Art. Of those frescoes that do qualify chronologically, few figurative compositions are earlier than LM IA¹¹. Yet, we have seen that virtually all the iconographic elements and design criteria were created in prepalatial seals and further elaborated by the end of MM II, as evidenced in the Phaistos Sealings. The iconographic creativeness of the Experimentation Period then expands the repertoire while the Minoan High Art Period develops the koine even further. Certainly, the activity in the LM palace workshops, where artists could talk to each other and see each other's work, would have helped the sharing of ideas across the media. Did the seal production with its concomitant tiny reliefs inspire the fashioners of relief stone vases and the creators of the early relief frescoes? Did the fresco

8 We are all indebted to Andreas Vlacopoulos who has given us an extremely thorough and illuminating assessment of the Nestor Ring, *supra fn.* 7. He examines all the associated problems and provides a detailed explanation of the iconography. My points of difference are that the divisions are rocky earth forms, not a tree trunk with branches, and that the creature below is a dragon, not a scorpion.

9 The publication of the sealings from various Minoan sites, CMS II.7 1998, CMS II.6 1999 and CMS II.8 2002.

10 See Walberg 1986; CMS B3, 289-297; EIKON 241-246; TECHNE 77-79. Also Betancourt 2018, 103-105.

11 Sinclair Hood has carefully documented the dating, Hood, AWP, 45-81. The plan of the Palace showing the provenance of the wall paintings and the dating Tables are particularly helpful, Figs. 2.1 to 2.4.

painters provide impetus to the seal artists to develop new iconographic details? Perhaps, but it seems that the frescoes were created a little too late to be the initiators of the Minoan iconographic repertoire and the Minoan idiom. In searching for the most creative artistic medium, this book argues for another source: the seal images and their *Icon* composition.

The compositional possibilities of creating a pictorial program within seal images was addressed in the discussion on layering meaning through *Icons* in Chapter 2. Once the fresco medium arrived, this nascent attribute could be exploited. The last fifty years have seen enormous advances in the study of frescoes and in what they can tell us of art and life in the Bronze Age Aegean. For this reason, we are all indebted to the scholars who have taken us so far in our understanding. Here I address but one aspect of the research, the link between seals and frescoes¹². Let us examine the claim that seal images are the original inspiration for fresco designs by analysing aspects of the fresco compositions that are not indebted to colour: subject matter detail and overall composition. Two examples are taken for discussion here. They are the Goddess Fresco and the Ship Fresco, both famous frescoes from the site of Acrotiri on the island of Thera. Although they are not from Crete itself they are painted in the Minoan idiom and are dated within the peak of Minoan High Art. Most importantly, their careful excavation has allowed an accurate rendition of the composition of each example, thus providing a sure basis for analysis. This is in contrast to the many frescoes that were found in Crete at the beginning of Minoan research and were promptly subjected to reconstructions which are largely questioned today. These two frescoes indicate the range of the iconographic repertoire as well as the characteristic features of fresco composition.

The Goddess Fresco from House Xeste 3 at Thera is one section of a series of frescoes that adorned different levels in Room 3¹³. It is the pivotal scene from the north wall, upper level. The composition is handled as a single *Icon*, a classic VIP granting audience presented in stage syntax. Within the *Icon*, the iconographic detail of the subject matter reveals the developments in Minoan High Art from earlier forms. This is the Great Lady, her divine status declared by her griffin familiar posed at her back. As Seated Lady she receives her servers who bring her gifts of precious crocus saffron stigmas. A monkey is the spirit helper and intermediary who lifts up some of the saffron gift to the deity. All the iconographic detail of dress, cushion and tiered shrine are recorded across the seal designs. Thus, viewing these Great Seated Lady depictions gives rich context to the extent of her power. The space around the main figures which, in the seal image the artist would carefully have left vacant in the interests of clarity, is adorned with floral/foliate elements. Little plant clumps have been replicated and placed in translatory symmetry across the background in an extended flower field to suggest the surrounding crocus. The patterning of natural forms seen from the earliest times remains strong.

In this particularly Minoan answer to beautifying the surrounding space, we are reminded again of the Aegean silence. Why is it that text is not placed around the figures to add explanations to the events pictured, as it would have been in the Egyptian and Mesopotamian traditions? Why is it that in the Minoan tradition plain washes of colour or spaced repetitions of floral or faunal elements surround the figures? In the Egyptian tradition, wall painting began early and provided an expansive canvas for the hieroglyphic text to be placed beside and around the figures, naming them and explaining their importance. In the Mesopotamian tradition the cuneiform script was more compact and more easily fitted around figures even when the canvas being used was the cylinder seal. Now we have already commented on the maximum space available to the artist with the cylinder seal because the design is worked around the surface of the cylinder sides rather than on the circular top. This is in strict contrast to the amount of space available to the Minoan artist who favoured the stamp seal – a decision which equated to choosing only to use the circular cylinder top with the resulting diminution of space in which to create the design. Once the stamp seal became the chosen form, then the Minoan artist was faced with

12 Engaging discussions with Fritz Blakolmer over many years in different cities have provided new insights on this topic although I remain inclined to the seal position. See Blakolmer, 2010d, 91-108 and 2016e, 139-140.

13 Illustrated in colour, WPT Plates Pl.12 and in line drawing, AWP Figs. 1.25 and 1.26.

the problem of achieving clarity in design within the small compass of the seal face. When writing began in Crete it was hieroglyphic in form and needed much space. When it appears on seals it takes up the whole of the seal face (and produces some beautifully executed seals like the four sided prisms in 2.8 to 2.12 and 3.4). When there is a design to be set on the seal face there is simply no room for hieroglyphic text. The signs of Linear A which followed are somewhat more economical in their space requirements but even this did not change the composition. When the seal compositions were enlarged to place them on palace and villa walls, the spaces that had been left for clarity in the seals provided substantial expanses that could be used for texts. However, even though there was now space for the fresco artist to use for textual explanation, they never availed themselves of the opportunity.

When the Ship Fresco was first discovered in Room 5 of the West House at Acrotiri it caused a sensation¹⁴. It is part of a miniature frieze which wrapped around the whole room above the window height. The Ship Fresco is the section on the south wall¹⁵. The almost 4-metre length of this fresco allows the artist to employ many *Icons* in presenting the celebration event of a great ship flotilla leaving one town and arriving at another. The composition is handled by placing the *Icons* in parataxis and presenting the scene in the syntax of the mountain view perspective. The background is completed as a colour wash to represent the sea surface (and in some parts the sky) and thus preserves the space around the main subjects. Within the *Icons*, the iconographic subject matter spans the physical detail of the land and the sea, the constructed environment and the activities of the faunal and human inhabitants as known from the seal images. The list of elements employed is long and includes bird, butterfly, belt and kilt, crested helmet, cloak, dolphin, festoon, gesture, gesturer, ikrion, lion, man, mast and stays, oar, predator, prey, steering oar, rocky ground, ship, sailor, stag, town buildings, tree, wateredge and woman. The composition is book-ended by showing human actors gesturing within a townscape. The departure town is given a distinctive character by depicting it sited on a river whose source lies in rocky mountain forests where a lion predator chases stags as prey. The main section of the composition comprises both large ships and smaller craft, all allowing great maritime detail and symbolic decoration to be provided, as well as impressive accoutrements for the elite passengers. In their movement to the arrival town, the ships are spaced carefully with no overlap in order to allow maximum vision of the detail, as is usual in the seal images. Between and around the ships, dolphins are leaping up and down, their paratactic placement complementing that of the ships.

The two examples just discussed give a clear indication of how Minoan frescoes use the iconographic repertoire and the compositional concepts and devices that were developed for the seal images. Other frescoes composed in the single *Icon* format include the woman boulder kneeler from Agia Triada¹⁶, the Mighty Lord giving the chest gesture in the relief fresco from Knossos¹⁷ and the bull leaping frescoes from Knossos¹⁸. Additional examples of frescoes composed of many *Icons* placed in parataxis include the Landscape Fresco from Agia Triada with the agrimi flying gallop and the cat stalking bird¹⁹, the Spring Fresco from Thera with rocky ground, lily plant clumps and birds flying²⁰, and the Dolphin Fresco from Knossos with dolphins leaping and fish swimming²¹. The result of this composition technique is to present a tapestry effect with the *Icons* forming the pattern repeat. While it has previously been thought

14 Of the many discussions available see Lyvia Morgan's authoritative book, *The Miniature Wall Paintings of Thera: A Study in Aegean Culture and Iconography*, Morgan, 1988 and Sarah Morris's thought-provoking essay, "A Tale of Two Cities: the Miniature Frescoes from Thera and the Origins of Greek Poetry", Morris 1989, 511-535.

15 Illustrated in colour, *ibid* Morgan 1988, Plate C and in line drawing, WPT Plates Pl. 3.

16 Line drawing reconstruction of the fresco on the north wall of the Royal Villa, Room 14, AWP 27, Fig. 1.7.

17 Photographs of the fresco pieces and two of the many reconstructions of the "Priest King", AWP Plate 26.

18 Photographs of the fresco pieces and a panel reconstruction of the "Taureador Frescoes", AWP Plate 12.

19 Line drawing reconstruction of the fresco on the south wall of the Royal Villa, Room 14, AWP 27, Fig. 1.9.

20 Photograph of the fresco from House Delta 2 as restored in the National Museum, Athens, AWP Plate 1, 2.

21 Restoration of the Dolphin Fresco from the "Queen's Megaron", AWP, Plate 42, 5.

that the seal images were derived by taking excerpts from the frescoes, it is actually the other way round. It is the fresco compositions that have their origin in the seal images and the *Icon* essence.

The Influence of the Seal Artist

Have we managed to reach into the Minoan mind by investigating the skill of the Minoan artist? In the text-silent record of Minoan Crete, most of what we know of Minoan identity comes from the hand of the artists. It is the seal artists who begin the revelation and consistently refine it for over twelve centuries, bequeathing its iconography to the other media. The seal artist tries to make sense of mortal existence, describing the physical world and the functioning of society, reflecting it back to humans while also manifesting the supernatural world. All the while the artist is shaping their peoples' thought with the images. Yet, even as all the artistic assessments of naturalism are made, especially for the creations of Minoan High Art, it is necessary to caution that Minoan naturalism is never entirely free in its depictions. There is always a patterning of the natural elements, a stress on the shape of things, a control on composition in the interests of meaning. The immediacy with which the seal artists convey their world to us is sourced in their eidetic point of view. They begin with the visual imprint, extract the essence of its character and then elaborate it so as to send the clearest message possible. This is the *Icon* concept, there from the beginning, extended to depicting the full scene as observed in the Phaistos Sealings, shaping all the Minoan High Art seal compositions and influencing the composition of pictorial programs in the other media.

The visual art of the seal artist can be compared with the verbal art of poetry and of mythmaking in general. Such verbal art might even have been already contemporaneous with the visual art. Scholars have drawn parallels between the images of Minoan art, particularly those of the Thera miniature frescoes, and descriptions in the earliest attested phases of Greek poetry, especially in the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey*²². Such phases might have had an even longer life, going back to the beginning of seal image creation. Having explored the efficacy of the *Icon* in creating bold and memorable images, I can see parallels in later attestations of Greek poetry, the prehistory of which is derived from oral traditions. The study of ancient Greek oral poetic traditions was pioneered by Milman Parry and Albert Lord²³, who showed that oral poetry, which was meant to be sung/recited by “the singer of tales” – as Lord describes an oral poet – relies on standard descriptive phraseology, which Parry had earlier described as “oral formulaic diction”²⁴. The formula, as in the case of a noun and its epithet²⁵, is created out of content and shape, the content – Lord called it the “theme” – being the subject matter, say ships, and the shape being dictated by grammatical and metrical constraints. Thus, the ships will be swift or black or dark-prowed depending on the grammar and where it fits within the metrical line. Yet, is this not how the *Icon* works in the seals? The *Icon* is comprised of content and shape, with the initial, essential and elaborate images modified by the constraints of the size and shape of the seal face. The creative process appears to be the same for the seal artist and the oral poet. If this is so, then the inspiration for the composition of oral poetry moves back several centuries to the mind-set of the Minoan seal artist and provides new avenues of enquiry²⁶.

When the first settlers came to Crete it must have been a pleasant arrival in a mostly benevolent land, leaving an indelible mark on the Minoan psyche. When artists began to depict their natural surroundings

22 Warren 1979, 115-129; Morris *supra fn.* 10; Hiller, TAW III 1, 229-234.

23 Their seminal research is presented in Albert Lord 1960, *The Singer of Tales*.

24 I thank Gregory Nagy for sharing his insightful knowledge of the glories of Homeric verse with me.

25 Milman Parry defined the oral formula as, “... an expression regularly used, under the same metrical conditions, to express an essential idea ...”, Parry (ed.) 1971, 13. See also Kirk, 1962, 59-68, on oral formulas.

26 The icon-formula parallels were earlier proposed and given preliminary discussion in the section on *Icon* art and oral poetry in Crowley, EIKON, 32-36.

it is not surprising that they conceived of themselves as living in a garden where the earth was sacred and brought forth riches. They portrayed humans as living a rich life, revealing their delight in every detail: the intricacies of a flower, the strength of a well-built wall, the speed of a ship, the beauty of textile, tie, girdle. They portrayed animals with movement and feeling. The artists conceived of their life as living in two worlds, each one pictured as a garden. There was the Lily Garden which encapsulated the primal beauty of the land when they first arrived: the verdant forests and beautiful endemic flora, the rich catch from the sea, regular rain and winter snow. Perhaps it was the benevolence of their surrounds that, when they came to conceive of their supernatural world, they created a second garden, the Papyrus Garden. This also was a place full of flowers, a created landscape where exotic and fantastic creatures frolicked with the Great Gods. The two gardens meld into each other as mortals call upon their deities through symbol and ceremony to come to their assistance, while the gods send messages to mortals through living animals and birds, and exotic and fantastic creatures. Yet there is a dark side to Minoan life. As always, there is sickness and injury, and death in childbirth or in war. For the women there is no direct reference to the dangers faced in their lives. For the men there are graphic portrayals of the training they must undertake to become warriors and of the deaths they face in battle. Assistance in these dire life events may be the role of the Lesser Spirits. Human hybrids and composite creatures are imaged but their particular role is not articulated since they are not shown interacting with humans. The greatest fear, however, is that the earthquake and tsunami could strike at any time. For protection from this seismic destruction the Minoans called again on their gods, the artists recording their kneeling the boulder ceremony and the sacred dance with death in the bull leaping where the bull avatar is the earthquake god. The ideal Minoan Woman is beautiful and pious. The ideal Minoan Man is skilled and courageous. They conduct their ceremonies with calm purpose in expectation of supernatural help. The benevolent gods that they worship reflect these positive outlooks, most especially in the anthropomorphic Great Gods who, with welcoming gestures, meet them face to face. The Minoan peoples emerge as a confident people whose vibrant society has long settled the island and recovered from seismic disasters, and now the Chosen Elite can speak directly to the Great Gods on their behalf.

The seal artist has presented their Great Gods as fully anthropomorphic and has shown them separately in featured images. Now, if I asked you, the reader, to think of an art which depicted the Gods as fully anthropomorphic – but more than that, clothed in the same attire as the people who worshipped them, beautiful of face and form, and shown untouched by the troubles of ordinary mortals – then you would nominate the art of Classical Greece. Call to mind some of the Acropolis sculptures. In the Parthenon frieze showing the Pan-Athenaic Procession, the deities, Poseidon, Apollo and Artemis, their calm faces apparent to all, await the arrival of the Athenian citizens in various roles who also are also depicted as calm and beautiful. On the parapet of the temple of Athena Nike, a Nike, her clothing marvellously draped across her body, reaches for her sandal. But look closely: all the figures wear the same clothing, all show the same beautiful faces. They are all the same – the humans, the female spirit, the gods, male and female. It is true that there are other sculptures which show that men are not always as free from care, that they have to face battle and death. However, at this high point of art in the sculptures of the Acropolis, humans are like gods and gods are like humans. The parallels between the coalescing of deity and mortal images on the Minoan seals and the deity and mortal images of Classical art are inescapable. It is the same grand vision.

Furthermore, there is a certain timelessness in the way that the artist portrays supernatural beings and depicts the interaction of mortals and deities. For hybrid humans as the Lesser Spirits and the VIPs as the Great Gods, the artist regularly uses the focus syntax to compose the image. This means that the deity or spirit is featured in the centre, with no surrounding detail. The effect is that the supernatural being exists outside time and space. For the depiction of the interaction of mortals and deities the artist has created the cultscape. The many elements that combine to signal a cultscape are all details of life in the real world and in the outdoors of that world. The ceremonies that are set within the cultscapes are all presented to the viewer as if she/he were present watching the activity unfold. Is this not a master stroke of the artist? The viewer of the seal image is the viewer of the ceremonies that each has seen performed many times.

The eidetic substrate of seal composition is dominant here but it is complemented by the artist using the stage syntax to compose the image. The effect is to have the viewer, on seeing the seal image, recall the many times he/she has seen the ceremony performed. It is as if the ceremony is always being performed in a “was, is now, and ever shall be” timelessness. This same cultscape presentation is used for the two portrayals where mortals meet their deities face to face: the VIP appearing on high and the VIP granting audience *Icons*. Accordingly, it produces the same effect. The viewer of the seal now can believe that the Great Gods are ever available to succour mortal humans.

While the Minoan seal artist has given us the best chance of trying to understand the Minoan mind, we are still prevented from delving deeper by the constraints of the Aegean silence. Nevertheless, it has been possible to gather the visual clues of the seal images to make some observations. The Minoan artist’s understanding of the deep structures of floral and faunal shape gives us a new appreciation of the ordered geometry of the natural world. Their creation of the Lily Garden and the Papyrus Garden allows us to appreciate the palpable detail of the lived-in real world and to envision what a supernatural world may contain. When they allow the free movement of animals and fantastic creatures between these two Gardens they are declaring that the interface between the real and the supernatural worlds is permeable and that mortals have access to both. Perhaps most telling of all is their evocation of a timelessness in the portrayal of their deities and of the interaction between their deities and mortal humans. All this suggests that the Minoan peoples saw their life in a physical and spiritual continuum, remembering the distant past, participating in the vibrant present and looking to a long future blessed by their many gods.

Plates 13.1 to 13.86

Living in the Real World



13.1 – rocky ground
(II.6 220/MM I-MM II)



13.2 – ship, spiral waves
(II.2 249/MM II)



13.3 – rocky ground, wavelines as a stream
(II.8 376/MM III-LM I)



13.4 – rosette
(II.1 85a/EM III-MM IA)



13.5 – triple bud, petaloid
(III 86/MM II)



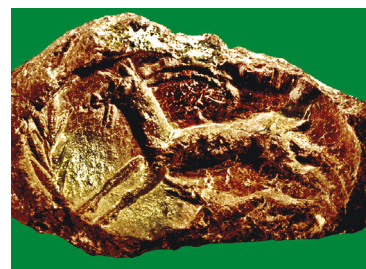
13.6 – lily flower plants
(VS 1B 113/LB I-LB II)



13.7 – agrimi caring for young
(II.8 508/LM I)



13.8 – sows standing
(VS 3 246/LB I-LB II)



13.9 – animal chasing, agrimi, hound
(II.8 354/LM I)



13.10 – dolphins, bait ball
(II.6 155/MM I-MM II)



13.11 – fish predator, octopus
(II.8 157/MM III-LM I)



13.12 – crab
(II.8 154/MM III-LM I)

Living in the Real World



13.13 – flask, loads, hound
(VI 44c/MM II)



13.14 – wickerwork barriers, ram
(II.8 33/MM II)



13.15 – herder, goats
(II.7 30/LM I)



13.16 – sailing ship
(III 232b/MM II)



13.17 – town houses
(II.7 218/LM I)



13.18 – shrine
(VS 1B 114/LB I-LB II)



13.19 – long pants
(II.6 26/LM I)



13.20 – fringed skirt, cape
(II.7 16/LM I)



13.21 – flounced skirt
(II.6 30/LM I)



13.22 – high hat, long kilt
(II.8 237/LM I)



13.23 – eight shields
(II.8 276/LM I)



13.24 – hide apron, cloak
(II.6 11/LM I)

Manifesting the Supernatural World



13.25 – palmette
(II.1 252a/EM III-MM 1A)



13.26 – papyrus plants
(II.6 262/LM I)



13.27 – palm tree
(II.8 297/LM I-LM II)



13.28 – monkey
(III.2 252a/EM III-MM 1A)



13.29 – lions
(II.1 224a/EM III-MM 1A)



13.30 – griffins
(II.1 250a/EM III-MM 1A)



13.31 – dragons
(VS 1B.76/LB I-LB II)



13.32 – genius
(XI.35/LB I-LB II)



13.33 – frontal face
(VI 100a/MM II)



13.34 – birdwoman
(III 367/LM I)



13.35 – bullman
(III 363/LM I-LM II)



13.36 – human parts plus
(II.7 145b/LM I)

Manifesting the Supernatural World



13.37 – Epiphany Lady
(II.3 51/LM I-LM II)



13.38 – Bow Lady
(XI 26/LB I-LB II)



13.39 – Great Lady, Mighty Lord
(I 101/LB I-LB II?)



13.40 – Staff Lady
(II.8 256/LM I)



13.41 – Dragon Lady
(II.6 33/LM I)



13.42 – Dolphin Lady
(VI 324/LM I)



13.43 – Staff Lord
(VS1A 142/LM I)



13.44 – Bow Lord
(II.6 36/LM I)



13.45 – Triple Bud Rod Lord
(V 173/LH I-LH II)



13.46 – Griffin Lord
(I 223/LB I-LB II)



13.47 – Bull Lord
(VII 102/LB I-LB II)



13.48 – Dolphin Lord
(II.8 258/LM I)

Negotiating the Interface between the Two Worlds

Symbols of the Earth and Sky and Flora and Fauna



13.49 – waveline, rocky ground
(II.6 20/LM I)



13.50 – sunburst
(V 199/LM I-LM II?)



13.51 – triple bud
(II.2 286b/MM II)

Symbols from the Constructed Environment



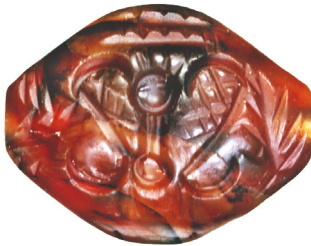
13.52 – double axe with scarf, grainshape, piriform shape (I 219/LM I-LM II)



13.53 – double axe with scarf
(VS 1B 138b/LB I-LB II)



13.54 – grainshape, curlshape, other symbols (II.3 103/LM I-LM II)



13.55 – vase
(VS 1B 275/LM I)



13.56 – grand pillar, cloak knot
(VI 364/LM I-LM II)



13.57 – double axe
(VII 54/MM II-MM III)

Animal Power and Spirit Assistance



13.58 – agrimi
(VII 68/MM III-LM I)



13.59 – dolphins leaping
(II.8 161/LM I)



13.60 – hound
(II.6 75/LM I)

Negotiating the Interface between the Two Worlds

Animal Power and Spirit Assistance



13.61 – bird
(I 150/LB I-LB II)



13.62 – butterfly messenger
(II.7 6/LM I)



13.63 – genius, bull
(II.7 31/LM I)

Ceremony



13.64 – processing
(VS 1A 186/LM I)



13.65 – serving at the altar
(II.6 3/LM I)



13.66 – serving at the shrine
(VS1A 176/LM I)



13.67 – presenting the cloak
(VS 1A 43c/MM II)



13.68 – kneeling the boulder, pulling the tree (II.3 114/LM I)



13.69 – leaping the bull
(II.7 38/LM I)



13.70 – forehead gesture
(II.6 13/LM I)



13.71 – woman and man
(VS 3 68/LM I)



13.72 – woman and man
(II.7 5/LM I)

Negotiating the Interface between the Two Worlds

Meeting the Great Gods



13.73 – Epiphany Lady, couple
(VI 280/LM I)



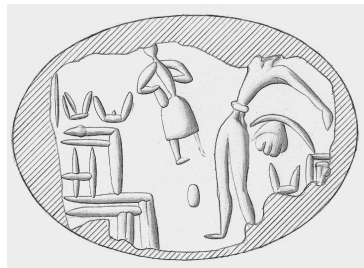
13.74 – Epiphany Lord, woman
(VI 281/LM I)



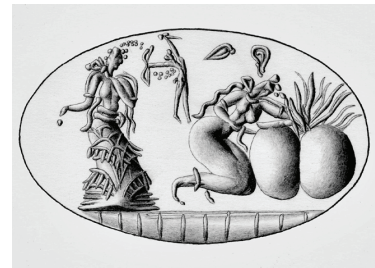
13.75 – Epiphany Lord, couple, warrior
(VS 2 106/LM I)



13.76 – Epiphany Lady, woman
(VI.6 6/LM I)



13.77 – Epiphany Lady, man
(II.7 1/LM I)



13.78 – Epiphany Lord, women
(VI 278/LM I)



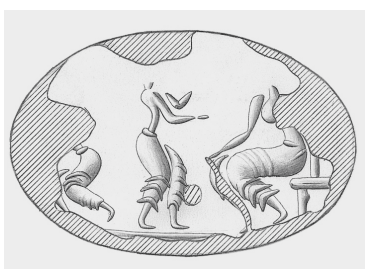
13.79 – Great Lady, servers
(II.8 268/LM I)



13.80 – Great Lady, server
(XI 30/LB I-LB II)



13.81 – Great Lady, server
(VS 1A 177/LM I)



13.82 – Great Lady, servers
(II.7 8/LM I)



13.83 – Great Lady, server
(II.6 8/LM I)

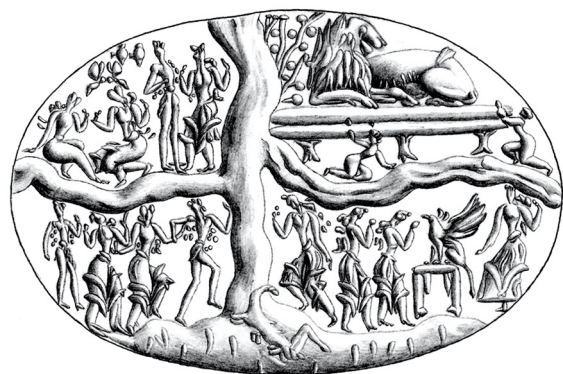


13.84 – Great Lady, server
(II.6 5/LM I)

The Minos Ring and the Nestor Ring



13.85 – Epiphany Lady, grand boat, pulling the tree
(Minos Ring, Herakleion Museum X-A1700/LM I)



13.86 – rocky ground divisions, dragon, lion, griffin
(Nestor Ring, VI 277/LM I)

Chapter 14 The Mycenaean Inheritance

In Chapters 4 to 12 we examined in detail the various aspects of Minoan and Mycenaean life as presented to us by the seal artists across the centuries. In the Iconographic Interpretation section which concluded each of these Chapters we concentrated on the Minoan experience down to the end of Minoan High Art but did not review what was happening in the Legacy and Late Periods. In this Chapter we turn to these two Periods and examine what can be learnt from the seal images created at this time, both in Crete as it continued with its seal tradition and on the Mainland. In the Legacy and Late Periods, there is a significant change in that the choices about iconographic content are now made by the Mycenaean ruling elite. In this Chapter, the illustrations of the seal images are, as they were in Chapter 13, mostly in colour and repeat seal images presented in the earlier Chapters as a reminder of their contexts¹. First, we look to establish how much of Minoan iconography was received into the Mycenaean sphere during the Minoan High Art Period. Then we investigate how much of the Minoan iconography was accepted in the Legacy and Late Periods, how much the images were changed to suit Mycenaean tastes and whether the Minoan meanings transferred across to the culture of the new rulers of the Aegean. There is much to assess here as we turn our attention to the Mycenaean Mainland.

The First Phase: Transference, Reception and Display (Plates 14.1 to 14.18)

We look first at the seals excavated at Mainland sites, seals which belong within the Minoan High Art Period. Early discussions on Aegean art have tried to find what is Minoan and what is Mycenaean in this excavated material. Concentrating on the seals, there are many questions to ask but it is not easy to find answers. Are the seals made by a Minoan artist in Crete and thus an import? Are the seals made for a Mycenaean owner by a Minoan artist living on the Mainland? Are they made by a Mycenaean artist trained in the Minoan seal tradition? Currently, with the extant material available, we have no way of knowing the answers to any of these questions. What we can say is that the seals are overwhelmingly Minoan in technical expertise and in iconography. Accordingly, I have taken the stand that, until the destructions on the island of Crete at the end of LM IB, the seals found on the Mainland were created with Minoan technical expertise and in the Minoan iconographic idiom, regardless of who was making them or where they were being made. It is through these prestige items that a comprehensive transfer of Minoan iconography occurred. This first transfer, with its resultant reception and display, is clearly documented in some of the finest seals remaining to us. The selection presented here comes from burial deposits at Mycenae, from the Vaphio Tholos and from the site of Pylos in burials and in the palace.

The Shaft Graves at Mycenae provide some of the earliest evidence in a variety of seals. The amethyst gem in 14.1 shows a male head in profile that closely aligns with the male heads known from contemporary Minoan seals as compared in 3.67 to 3.72. The war scene of 14.2 and the hunt scene of 14.3 are both handled in the duelling Icon using the climactic point syntax. Both compositions explode in violence but, just as the victor makes the fatal lunge, we are reminded of the cost: the death of the vanquished warrior and the grievous wounds to the successful hunter. Interest in chariot scenes is also recorded as in the gold signet of 6.106. The Vaphio Tholos provides further evidence in its collection of fine seals.

¹ The original seals, signets and sealings, illustrated in colour in this Chapter, have all been discussed in the appropriate Chapters above where they were illustrated as the black and white drawings of the seal impressions.

The beautiful signet in 14.4 is pure Minoan idiom. A cultscape portrays a pulling the tree *Icon* with the tree growing from rocky ground and the beehive with bees below. A woman in flounced skirt draws attention with her gesture to the male tree puller on one side and his panoply on the other. Overhead hovering symbols provide a further link to the supernatural world. The boar tusk helmet of 14.5 enjoys sole subject status in focus syntax. It is one of the special objects and testifies to the importance of the warrior. In 14.6 the hunt theme is handled by the *Icon* of dealing with the catch. Two hunters are trussing a great lion, clearly successful in their exploits. Many of the Mycenae Chamber Tombs held seals created in this first transfer period. The antithetical group composition in 14.7 shows two lions rampant about a Minoan curved altar. Working to an exceptionally tight reflectional symmetry, the artist has coalesced the lion heads into one frontal head. In 14.8 two dragons rest rather in the manner of two bulls reclining. In 14.9, on a fine carnelian lentoid, a Mistress of Animals *Icon* portrays the Lion Mistress in flounced skirt wearing a triple horn bow hat topped with a double axe. It is one of two almost identical portrayals. The other, also on a carnelian lentoid, is seen in 1.24. Turning to the site of Pylos, both palace and tholos tombs provide seal evidence. The sealing in 14.11 comes from the Pylos palace and is the impression of a seal featuring the animal attack theme where the predator is a hound in the flying gallop chasing the stag quarry. In 14.10 a magnificent gold amygdaloid from the Rutsi Tholos shows the attempted capture of a bull. The formidable animal has been forced into a reverse twist by the net and it tramples the hunter fallen below – all is pure Minoan artistry. From the same Tholos, the agate cushion with gold mounting in 14.12 celebrates the role of fantastic creatures. A great female griffin, resplendent with neck and wing curls, stands statant, wings elevated, head regardant erect.

The recent excavation of the Griffin Warrior Grave at Pylos has provided new insights into this first period of the transference of Minoan iconography, not the least because the warrior was buried with many fine seals like the six illustrated here as 14.13 to 14.18. The iconography across the four great gold signet rings records the bull sports theme and three cultscapes. In 14.13 the bull is in the flying gallop with a leaper behind, turned towards the bull. In 14.15 an elaborate cultscape is composed of several *Icons*. It shows an incurving bay with the tricurved arch patterned sea surface giving way to a wateredge of rocky ground which provides the foundation for a tree shrine flanked by palms. That the sea is meant to extend around the shrine scene is indicated by the rocky wateredge fringing the top perimeter. On one side of the shrine are two women servers wearing fringed skirts and high hats and giving the forehead gesture. On the other side of the shrine the Great Lady and her two diminutive servers are wearing frilled skirts and neck scarves floating free. Parallels with the Minos Ring immediately spring to mind while all iconographic details are matched in LM seals and sealings. The VIP Lady in 14.16 gives the power gesture with a staff topped by horns like the one in 9.88. She is accompanied by a pair of birds, one on each side, perched on rocky outcrops. Thus, she is the Bird Lady identified by her familiars, as are the Bird Ladies in 12.54 and 12.84. The presence of the birds recalls their ability to carry a goddess through the air and their role as messengers to mortals. The Bird Lady is depicted with the iconographic details of flying hair and pointed feet usually reserved for the Epiphany Lady. There is no mortal below to greet her as there would be in the VIP appearing on high *Icon*. However, the suggestion is there in her descending pose, just as it is with the flying Griffin Lady in 12.73. In the VIP granting audience *Icon* in 14.18 the Great Lady is shown as Seated Lady holding a mirror as in 12.37. She is seated on a high-backed chair with a footstool. A bird perches at her back, thus alluding to the Bird Lady persona. A skyline arches above. Her server approaches, bringing an unidentified item that looks rather like a didgeridoo or an alpine horn.

There are also two fine two agate seals with intricate designs. The image on the agate lentoid in 14.14 is composed in the animals at the curved altar *Icon*. It depicts two geniuses about the curved altar which supports double horns with a sprouting plant while overhead a sunburst shines. One genius holds the ewer as is usual and the other an unidentified item shaped like a cone. The whole image is very close to the composition on the Vaphio lentoid 10.136. One of the finest carved seals ever to come to light is the agate amygdaloid in 14.17. It displays the war duelling *Icon* at the climactic point. The warrior victor, clad only in the belt and codpiece and with hair flying back, delivers the fatal blow, plunging his sword

into the neck of his adversary. The warrior vanquished, supposedly protected by his crested helmet and eight shield, tries in vain to use his spear. Below, clad only in a plaid kilt, a warrior fallen lies contorted in his death throes, his sword discarded, useless, on the ground. The carving of the detail is superb and is matched by the amazing composition. War and hunt duelling Icons regularly use diagonal play to emphasise the violence of the confrontation. An almost identical composition is seen in the gold cushion 14.2 but the amygdaloid artist here has excelled in its use. The diagonals of body lunge, leg stretch, spear and scabbard alignment are all shown to advantage but there is one extra telling detail. The victor is at full stretch, his upper arm grasping the helmet crest of the warrior vanquished to wrench his head back and expose the neck. Then the fatal sword thrust is delivered down, the only vertical in the whole composition. Brilliant!

The Second Phase: Rejection, Continuity, Variation (Plates 14.19 to 14.54)

The full Minoan repertoire was already available on the Mainland by the beginning of LH II but as the Mycenaean ascendancy grew in strength the iconography changed. Turning back to Chapters 4 to 12, we now look at what Minoan iconography continues to be employed by seal artists and what no longer appears in the repertoire as we move into the Legacy and Late Periods.

Rejection

The absence of some of the foremost Minoan *Icons* and elements is notable, as recorded in the examples for the Legacy Period in Chapters 4 to 12. Many earth and sky elements discussed in Chapter 4 disappear. Particularly noticeable is the absence of the boulder and water symbols. The profusion of flowers, plants and trees that was documented in Chapter 5 is no longer observable. The interest in animal life seen in Chapter 6 continues but the cat is gone, as are the scorpions, butterfly and dragonfly. In the realm of the sea, virtually all the sea creatures seen in Chapter 7 disappear. We are missing the many varied fish, the lifelike crabs, the bait balls and the jellyfish and there is only one triton as in 7.83. The constructed environment discussed in Chapter 8 loses almost all the detail of small items like vessels, nets, collars and leashes. There are no fleecy skirts and few frilled or fringed ones while women rarely wear pants anymore. All eight hovering symbols that are positioned above human figures in the complex scenes of Minoan high Art have disappeared. These are the eye, ear, grainshape, piriformshape, pillarshape, curlshape, triple bud rod and double axe with scarf, although a residual use of the grainshape is seen in the two outlier examples 9.61 and 14.56. Of the twelve special objects of symbolic importance, three – the panoply, scarf knot and vase – are gone while the triton has a belated appearance in a cultscape in 7.83. Of the exotic animals and fantastic creatures surveyed in Chapter 10, almost immediately we lose the monkey while the dragon is only known in one clear example, 10.126². Chapter 11 gathered the hybrid humans, frontal faces and various combination fantasies on view but virtually all of these are gone, including the formerly much depicted birdwomen.

Turning to the Great Gods, Chapter 12 presented the Minoan Pantheon in Table 1 listing the forty deity personas down to the end of Minoan High Art, and the Mycenaean Pantheon in Table 2 listing the twenty-eight deity personas known in the Legacy Period. Of the twenty-nine Minoan Lady and Lord personas listed in Table 1, only thirteen remain in Table 2, and only eight if we remove the instances of only one credible sighting. The Mistress and Master personas are eleven in number in Table 1 and fifteen in Table 2, although both totals are somewhat reduced when the personas based on only one example are removed. Table 2 reveals both omissions from the Table 1 list and the creation of new candidates. The whole category of the Mistress with Animal *Icon* has virtually disappeared. The Bird Mistress is gone but a Bull Mistress is shown. Four new Masters have appeared. Last, but not least, of the roles of women and men described in Chapter 9 and reviewed in the discussion on the ceremonies they conducted to

2 The head of a dragon is shown on a fragment of the sealing from Knossos in 10.125 but the stylistic date of LM IIIA1 is queried.

commune with the gods, many are simply not there anymore. Mortals greet the Great Gods in the VIP appearing on high *Icon* in one example 12.176 and in the VIP granting audience *Icon* in one example with mortal servers in 12.88. The ceremony of kneeling the boulder is gone while that of pulling the tree has only one example, 5.129/9.61. The ceremony of presenting the cloak, discussed in Chapter 8, is not recorded. The ceremonies honouring special events in human lives, such as marriage and farewells, are not continued. There is a winnowing, too, of the gestures given by mortals and deities. Five of the eight Minoan gestures used by mortals – the heart, shoulder, reaching, holding hands and arms high gestures – are lost. Five of the seven gestures used exclusively by the gods – the hips, brandishing, pointing, beckoning and power gestures – are also lost.

Continuity

Some mainstream Minoan iconography continues into the Legacy Period. Of all the images and symbols of the earth and sky discussed in Chapter 4, only a few rocky ground motifs and some celestial signs are still used as in 4.34 to 4.39 and 4.100 to 4.108. The rocky ground subtending the shrines in 14.26 has now become a series of loops. The sunburst in 14.37 shines over symbolic creatures. Reviewing the flora in Chapter 5 reveals that only a branch now suffices while the triple bud as in 14.36, the papyrus as in 14.31/5.54 and the palm as in 14.19, 14.22, 14.27 and 14.39 are favoured. Much of the fauna seen in Chapter 6 is still shown. Of the forest animals, the agrimi is still shown as a Master attendant in 14.28 but comes to look more like the domestic goat as the animal sacrificed in 14.39. The stag and boar seem to get a new lease of life as in 6.40 to 6.48. The bird is shown in natural depictions but also in symbolic as well as messenger roles as in 6.175 to 6.180. Domestic animals now populate the seals, with cattle the most often depicted. They stand or rest as sole subjects, are the prey in animal attack scenes, suckle their young in fecundity scenes and feature in symbolic presentations as in 6.115 to 6.126. In 14.19 the bull is sole subject, in 14.22 a cow suckles its calf and in 14.30 bulls are attendants to a Mistress. Rams remain popular as in 6.127 to 6.129, also featuring in symbolic roles as in the animals at the tree of life antithetical group in 6.129 and with their horns on the tusk helmet in 14.5. The hound, which has been there since the beginning, remains a favourite as in 6.109 to 6.114 where it is seen in hunt scenes and in attendant and familiar roles. It courses beside its hunter owner in 14.24 to brave the rearing lion and holds the great boar at bay in 14.31 so that its master can deliver the fatal spear thrust. Of all the sea creatures covered in Chapter 7, only the dolphin, the octopus and the argonaut enjoy any sustained representation, as in 7.34 to 7.36, 7.55 to 7.57, 7.82 to 7.84, 14.29 and 14.40 to 14.42 where they are shown both as natural creatures and in symbolic roles. In 14.29 dolphins leap as attendants to the Dolphin Mistress. The constructed environment, so graphically shown in the pieces from Minoan High Art in Chapter 8, is now represented by some ships, shrines and the three altar types – table, curved and sacrifice – as in 8.85 to 8.93, 14.25 and 14.39. Clothing for women still shows the flounced skirt and some fringed ones while the male continues to be shown with belt and codpiece as in 8.130 to 8.134. Equipment for war and the hunt remains in the repertoire as in 8.154 to 8.159. The constructed symbols, grand pillar and double horns, are regularly seen as in 8.91, 8.92, 8.130, 14.25, 14.26 and 14.32. Of the twelve special objects of symbolic importance in Minoan High Art, eight continue, most in more muted form. They are the double axe, eight shield, helmet, cloak knot, horn bow, orb rod, triple bud rod and ewer. Three of the exotic animals and fantastic creatures of Chapter 10 become firm favourites and are given considerable coverage. They are the lion as in 10.43 to 10.57, the griffin as in 10.85 to 10.96 and the genius as in 10.145 to 10.156. The lion is shown in hunt and animal attack scenes as in 14.20, 14.22, 14.24 and 14.31, in suckling and caring for young scenes in 14.21 and 14.22 and in symbolic representations in 14.37 and 14.38. The griffin is seen in animal attack scenes and in symbolic roles as in 14.27, 14.34 and 14.37. The genius is evidenced in his symbolic role in 14.30 and 14.33. From the hybrid and combination forms gathered in Chapter 11, the animal men are the great survivors as in 11.34 to 11.54. The bullman has considerable coverage, somersaulting as in 14.41 and running as in 14.42.

Of the Great Gods discussed in Chapter 12 there are eight personas who have presence in the Legacy Period as seen in 12.87 to 12.98 and 12.174 to 12.188. Listed in Table 2 of Chapter 12, they are the Great Lady, Seated Lady and Griffin Lady, and the Staff Lord, Mighty Lord, Griffin Lord, Lion Lord and Agrimi Lord. The Griffin Lord is seen in his chariot in 13.27. Mistress and Master images are quite strong, showing some alignment with the Lady and Lord personas, as in 12.114 to 12.119 and 12.195 to 12.212 where there is a decided increase in the number of Masters. A Dolphin Mistress is seen in 14.29, an Agrimi Master in 14.28 and a Lion Master in 14.38. Several of the roles of women and men seen in Chapters 9 and 12 are continued. Men are engaged in the pursuits of war and the hunt as in 9.133 to 9.144 while women attend to religious duties as in 9.55, 9.56 and 9.76 to 9.78. Generic ceremonies of worship are on show, with processing as in 14.32 and 9.57, sacrificing as in 9.58 and 9.59, serving at the altar as in 14.25 and serving the shrine as in 14.26. The ceremony of leaping the bull is strongly in evidence as in 14.43 to 14.54, including an unusual depiction with two leapers somersaulting in 14.23. As for the gestures, three of the eight Minoan gestures used by mortals – the greeting, forehead and hands high – continue to be used as in 9.76 to 9.78, 14.26 and 14.32. Gesturing by the Great Gods is limited to the exclusive male chest gesture and the sharing with mortals of greeting and hands high gestures. All these remaining gestures appear to be used as in the Minoan idiom.

Variation

However, it is not simply what iconographic elements are out and what are in that marks the change into the Legacy Period. It is also how those iconographic motifs that continue to be depicted are used and what relationships they bear to each other. We now see that the Minoan idiom does not always hold in the continuing subject matter as the Mycenaean ascendancy strengthens. Examples from the treatment of flora and fauna, the constructed environment, fantastic creatures, deities, the bull sports and human activities reveal the variations.

The detailed delight in the bounty of nature disappears from the artistic record. There are fewer flowers and less variety in the trees and plants, which, in comparison with the earlier Minoan examples, are stiff, even stylised. They are increasingly used only as symbols as with the triple bud rods separating a ram and a bull in 6.122 and the elaborate triple bud rod forming the tree of life in 14.36. The late development of the palm deserves special consideration. This is where a particularly stylised form of the palm becomes the norm as seen in 14.19, 14.22, 14.27 and 14.39. Some show shoots emerging each side of the trunk base in continuation of the Minoan palms in 5.95 and 5.97 while the trunk is thinner and taller and regularly horizontally ribbed. The canopy consists of a central spike or spikes or triple bud with branches/inflorescence curving down each side. What we appear to have here is a coalescing of two motifs which have long been in the iconographic repertoire: the palm tree and the triple bud. This hybrid, which we may term the Mycenaean palm³, is thus able to combine the artistic strength of both original motifs and, judging by its usage, is also able to encapsulate much of the original meaning of fertility and links to the supernatural world.

With the animals it is the loss of movement that is most observable. The characteristic Aegean animal poses of flying gallop, flying leap and reverse twist are gradually reduced to the flying gallop as in 14.23, 14.44 and 14.49, while even that becomes stiffer as in 14.47. Scenes of predation and fecundity are featured as in 14.20 to 14.22 but the Minoan sensitivity to animal joy and pain gradually disappears. The combination of the suckling cow and the attacking lion in 14.22 would not have appeared in a Minoan composition.

The constructed symbols of staff, double horns and grand pillar remain but with different stress on their importance and prevalence of use. The staff with its power gesture no longer is the great statement of authority, appearing rarely as in the hands of a Master in 12.196. The double horns symbol continues to identify altar and shrine as in 14.25, 14.26 and 14.32 and it subtends a Mighty Lord in 10.154.

3 Similar linearisation is observed in the pottery motifs where there might have been cross-fertilisation. See Furumark 1941 (1972), Motive 14 Palm I and Motive 15 Palm II, 276-282.

However, the double horns are not regularly used as the base for sprouting greenery in association with ewer and vase. The grand pillar is much more in evidence. Animals stand beside it as in 10.49 or are tethered to it as in 6.123 and it is shown in connection with shrines as in 8.89 and 9.76. Significantly, the grand pillar becomes the central symbol in antithetical group compositions where it is attended by lions and griffins and even geniuses as in 10.146 and birds as in 6.180. This *Icon* of animals at the grand pillar has taken the powerful eastern motif of animals at the tree of life, substituted the pillar for the tree and thus created a potent Aegean statement. In similar substitutions, the curved altar replaces the tree of life as the focus in the antithetical group and the *Icon* of animals at the curved altar becomes another potent Aegean symbol. It is seen with hound attendants in 6.111 and lion attendants in 10.51. There are some examples that continue with the original animals at the tree of life *Icon*. Couchant rams attend a papyrus triple bud tree in 6.129 while sejant sphinxes attend a tree shaped like a triple bud rod in 14.36.

There are eight special objects of symbolic importance in Minoan High Art that continue in the Legacy images. Six objects – the double axe, eight shield, helmet, cloak knot, horn bow and ewer – show restricted usage in that they do not appear to be subjects in their own right as previously but appear to continue courtesy of their association with a major subject matter element. The double axe and horn bow are shown in the special headdress worn by the Mistress as in 14.30. The helmet is worn by warrior or Master as in 14.38. The eight shield and cloak knot come with the animal quarry or the hunter, with the Master as in 14.38 or the bullman as in 14.41. The ewer is held by the genius as in 10.145, 10.153 and 10.154, thus continuing his original role. Some Mycenaean understanding of the content of these six motifs must inform these usages but it is clear that the potency of their Minoan meaning has waned. The other two special objects, the triple bud rod and the orb rod, grow stronger. The triple bud rod now becomes a favourite way to render the tree of life as in 14.36. It is also seen as a separate motif as in 14.42. The orb rod which did not have great exposure in Minoan images is now seen as a separate symbol. It is linked with the genius as in 10.145 and is the central symbol in the antithetical group with attendant lions as in 10.50 and with stags as in 8.45. These depictions show the orb as a sphere. With some examples like 8.46 and 6.121, the orb has “wings” and even a flattened top so that the orb rod looks more like a grand pillar and is used at that scale in the antithetical group.

Of the Fabulous Five exotic/fantastic creatures, three – the lion, the griffin and the genius – continue their Minoan roles into Mycenaean iconography. The variation here is that they enjoy even more expansive coverage and their symbolic roles begin to dominate. The proliferation of lion images is no doubt partly due to the fact that it is not an exotic animal for the Mainland Mycenaeans. In studies across many years, Nancy Thomas has documented the existence of *Panthera leo* in Greece and elsewhere⁴. Thus, direct experience with lions no doubt sharpened portrayals of predator lions as in 14.20 and lion hunts as in 14.24. The lion's magnificent power is fully appreciated by the Mycenaeans who present it as a statement of their own ferocious aggression⁵. Lions are also shown as familiars/attendants to Lords and Masters and as guardians to grand pillars seen in 10.49 to 10.57 in continuation of the earlier Minoan usages. However, their role has been expanded so as to create an increased symbolic presence. The griffin, too, continues its Minoan predator and symbolic roles but, as with the lion, increasingly concentrates on its symbolic duties. Griffins are sole subjects, posed grandly as in 14.34, 14.37 and 10.88. They are the identifying familiar/attendant for Lords and Masters, as with the Griffin Lord in 14.27 and Ladies and Mistresses as in 10.92 to 10.95 and as protector of the grand pillar as in 10.90. The third of the Fabulous Five to become embedded in Mycenaean iconography, the genius, continues to be portrayed, as before, in symbolic roles, with rather more variation seen in these roles in the Legacy Period. The genius does hold the vase in 10.145 as in his original role but his server roles are extended⁶. Quadruple geniuses are

4 Thomas, POLEMOS, 297-312; XAPIS, 161-206; METAPHYSIS, 129-137; ZOIA, 53-81.

5 See also Bloedow, EIKON 295-305; POLEMOS, 285-295; MELETEMATA, 53-61.

6 Tina Boloti sees the server role in the genius carrying the cloak knot (sacral knot) in the wall painting fragment from Pylos, Boloti 2016, 505-510. Carrying the prestige male garment would accord well with the male-oriented persona of the genius at this time.

servers to what appears to be a Great Seated Lady in 14.56 while double geniuses salute the Bull Mistress in 14.30 in an antithetical group composition which is new to the iconographic repertoire. Such an association with female deities runs counter to the male orientation of the Minoan idiom. It marks an extreme variation and calls for an explanation. The genius becomes the attendant to the Master of Animals as in 10.153. It can take the form of a geniusman and also be the Master of Animals with hound attendants as in 10.152. Then the genius expands its roles so as to be really the only spirit helper. He is the hunter in the regularly used *Icon* of carrying the catch as in 10.148 to 10.150. This is the role which is also seen with the successful human hunter and the lion/griffin predator holding the dead agrimi, bull or stag. There appear to be two aspects to this hunter role. On the one hand the genius is identified as the actual hunter, either successful himself or helping to promote a human hunter's success. On the other hand the genius, in carrying the catch, may well be ensuring safe passage for the slain animal to the world beyond. The sunbursts placed beside the group in 10.148 would indeed suggest such carriage to the spirit world. The image in 14.33 is also composed in the carrying the catch *Icon*. It shows the genius bearing a dead man over his shoulder, the body slumped and hanging down. Does the dual role of the genius have a parallel application here? Does the protection offered to the live human hunter continue in death as safe conduct to the afterworld? If so, this would cast the genius in the role of psychopompos and further consolidate his deity identity. As so often with Aegean iconography, we are left to wish that we had some accompanying text to help explain.

The sphinx, noted in 10.97 to 10.99, hardly had a presence in Minoan iconography but now comes to the fore as in 14.35, 14.36 and 10.102 to 10.105. Shown symbolically in the heraldic poses couchant or sejant, it regularly wears the plumed hat formerly worn by the Mighty Lord. The elevation of the sphinx to a substantial iconographic motif in Mycenaean art marks a substantial change from the Minoan idiom and suggests that the meaning of the sphinx had greater resonance for the Mycenaeans. The acceptance of the sphinx in the Legacy Period may well reflect increasing communications with the east and Egypt. The sphinx is, after all, the most powerful statement of the might of Pharaoh and as such, is male. The Mycenaean sphinx, if the link with the Mighty Lord through the plumed hat holds, is also male and is always shown in symbolic roles. Associating its iconography with that of the Pharaonic sphinx fits well with concepts of royal power held by the aspirational Mycenaean rulers.

As for the Great Gods, the reduction in numbers sees the female personas shrinking more than the male. Leaving aside the personas with only one sighting, there are three credible Ladies, three Mistresses, five Lords and six Masters. The strengthening of the Master sightings, as well as the expanded role of the genius in them, is notable. This severe reduction of deity personas means that the identity groupings noted in the Minoan examples have now dissipated. These variations amount to a rejection of much of the iconography of Minoan deity personas, if not of the deities themselves, raising the question whether the ones that remain have the same meaning as in Minoan times.

The continuing coverage of the bull sports theme provides perhaps the most interesting of the variations occurring in the Legacy Period, as seen across the examples 9.92 to 9.96 and 14.43 to 14.54. These changes are in great contrast to the scenes of Minoan High Art, best displayed in the LM I sealings 9.157 to 9.168. Of the six *Icons* used to display the ceremony of leaping the bull – leaper preparing, somersaulting, landing, falling, fallen and bulldogging – the full range is known at the beginning of the Legacy Period. However, it is not long before the artists concentrate on one *Icon*, leaper somersaulting, as in 14.49 to 14.53. In all these, the somersault is completely misunderstood with the leaper either arched the wrong way or lying the length of the bull's back. Moreover, in each example the leaper holds the bull's horn, a method which is only ever the case in the Minoan idiom when the bulldogging *Icon* is used. The pose of the bull is also misunderstood and in 14.54 we do not even have a bull but an agrimi/goat! The original flying gallop, still being attempted in 14.49, slows down to a static pose, resting as in 14.52 or standing as in 14.53. This may partly be ascribed to the general loss of movement in the depiction of animal bodies that is evident in the Legacy Period, as discussed above. However, it is certainly also due to a misunderstanding of the momentum of the charging bull. Then there is the overall effect of the presentation where bull and man are given about the same amount of space in the

composition. This is in complete contrast to the often-partial body of the leaper and the overwhelming presence of the bull seen in the LM I examples. The setting of the Legacy bull sports also records changes by including surrounding vegetation as in 14.47 and 14.52 to 14.54, which is not seen in the focus compositions of LM I. These many significant differences, observable in every aspect of the Legacy Period bull sports, suggest a provincial art not fully familiar with either the original performance or Minoan artistic tradition. It is important not to equate these Legacy Period images with those of Minoan High Art when considering either the art or the evidence for the bull sports. These significant differences also raise the question of when the bull sports ceased to be conducted and whether the Mycenaean examples are simply a reminder of a past spectacle whose essential details have been forgotten. It is clear that great importance was attached to the bull sports theme for it to have continued to be so strongly (even if imperfectly) portrayed. This suggests that knowledge of the meaning of the bull sports continued into the Mycenaean consciousness even if the bull sports were no longer conducted as a ceremony of worship to the Bull God in his avatar form⁷.

The Mycenae Ring and the Tiryns Ring (Plates 14.55 to 14.56)

These two famous gold signets have enjoyed extensive coverage since their early discovery through their repeated illustration and because of voluminous discussion about their artistic detail and possible meaning⁸. They have regularly been presented as characteristic examples of Minoan and/or Mycenaean art. After our iconographic investigations it is now possible to see them anew as Mycenaean adaptations of the iconography of the Minoan tradition. Their stylistic dating takes us from the First Phase of transference, reception and display into the Second Phase of rejection, continuity and variation. Their rich use of iconographic detail is like a summary of the transition.

The **Mycenae Ring** uses seven *Icons* to craft its complex cultscape in stage syntax: celestial sign, hovering symbol, VIP granting audience, VIP with servers, tree growing from rocky ground, pulling the tree and animal head. The main subject is the VIP granting audience *Icon* with the Great Lady of large size, as Seated Lady, welcoming the servers who bring gifts to her. She is seated on rocky ground with a tree growing from rocky ground at her back. Both she and her women servers are bare-breasted, wear flounced skirts and have elaborate hair styles. Overhead the celestial sign comprises a curved skyline subtending a sunburst and moon crescent. The double axe and panoply as hovering symbols sit immediately below this while the left bezel curve holds a row of six lion heads. Much of the iconographic detail conforms with that of the Minoan personas of Great Lady, Seated Lady and Flower Lady but there are significant differences. In the main VIP granting audience *Icon* here, the servers bring flowers and poppies which have not, so far, been featured as gifts. The VIP with server *Icon* is altered from the usual composition of having the two small women servers, one each side of the Great Lady as in 12.39 to 12.41. One server is now included in the main VIP granting audience *Icon* while the other server is the officiant in the pulling the tree *Icon*. Yet, the server as tree puller does not wear long pants as one would expect from the Minoan examples 5.121, 5.123 and 5.126. Nor does she assume the normal stepping up pose of tree pullers but stands flatfoot on the ground. The animal head here is the known lion head frontal but its use in the prestigious side curve of the bezel, repeated six times, constitutes a breakthrough image. The handling of the hovering symbol *Icon* is unprecedented in having the special objects, the double axe and the panoply, perform as hovering symbols. There is also the question of more nuanced differences like the shape of the small female tree puller and the abrupt change of direction in the handling of the rocky ground each side of the Lady's feet. Finally, it must be noted that the use of seven *Icons* contributes to an almost *horror vacui* composition. Four, perhaps five, *Icons* are the maximum for

7 Refer to the interpretation of the bull sports ceremony in Chapter 9 above and the identifying of the Bull Lord as the god of the earthquake in Chapter 12 above.

8 Both rings are from treasure hoards reburied in Mycenaean times. The Mycenae Ring was found at the Ramp House south of Grave Circle A at Mycenae. The Tiryns Ring was found in the lower town of Tiryns.

elegant display of the subject matter, something we have observed in the best Minoan works, conscious as the artists were of the restricted size of the seal face. Attempting to include so many *Icons*, each with considerable detail, leads to a cluttered canvas that is not characteristic of Minoan composition.

The cultscape on the Mycenae Ring is heavily reliant on Minoan iconography, so much so that it could, at first glance, be seen as Minoan. However, there are significant changes to the Minoan iconographic detail and to the norms of Minoan design concepts. These changes can only be the result of Mycenaean choices to vary the original Minoan idiom, whether by deliberate intention or because of incomplete understanding. Accordingly, the Mycenae Ring should be seen as a Mycenaean creation, already diverging from the Minoan idiom as art moves into the Legacy Period.

The **Tiryns Ring** also uses seven *Icons* to compose its complex cultscape in stage syntax: VIP granting audience, gesturing, processing, carrying the special object, special object, celestial sign and hovering symbol. Again, the VIP granting audience *Icon* is the main subject. The Great Lady, as Seated Lady, is clothed in a long gown, has ringlets at the back and wears a flat hat. She sits on a high-backed chair where a bird perches at her back and she has a footstool for her feet. A table altar is set up behind her showing a half rosette and she has an orb rod as special object set up before her. Her servers are four geniuses all carefully depicted in profile with wasp waists and elaborate cape backs. They are processing to her, each carrying the ewer as special object, while an upright palm branch is placed at the back of each figure. The groundline is a constructed dado of triglyphs and half rosettes. The celestial sign *Icon* is a wavy skyline subtending the sunburst and moon crescent. The hovering symbol *Icon* consists of four grainshapes shown against a dotted sky above the skyline. The Lady welcomes her servers by raising the chalice to give the toasting gesture. In every *Icon* and in almost every iconographic detail there are changes to the expected Minoan usage. When the celestial sign incorporates a skyline it denotes an outdoor event not, as here, a possible indoor event indicated by the elaborate dado as groundline. The grainshape hovering symbol seems unexceptional although it is repeated and shown against an unusual dotted, perhaps starry, sky. The high-backed chair has a long history, as does the association of the bird with female divinities, but they are now seen together as also in 14.18. A richly embellished gown replaces the flounced skirt or long pants. The flat hat looks like the prestigious plumed hat but the plume is missing. The placement of an altar behind the chair and the orb rod before the seated figure is new. The properly shaped geniuses carry their ewers as special objects, as in their original fertility role, and the palm branches behind echo the vegetation in earlier examples, particularly the ones in 10.129 and 10.136. Yet, that is where traditional genius usage ends. Previously, only one genius is featured in a seal image, or perhaps two if it is an antithetical group composition. To have four geniuses shown together is a startling first, as is their service to what appears to be a female deity. Then, quite exceptional is the gesture used to welcome her servers. The toasting gesture with chalice is a one only example and new to the iconographic record.

The Tiryns Ring is an exceptional iconographical statement. The significant variations and new features surely cannot be accidental but must represent changed attitudes to previous iconographic norms. The most significant of these is the move to have geniuses serve a female deity when the Minoan idiom always has them operating in the male sphere. What is the identity of this Great Seated Lady who represents such an abrupt change to long-established iconography? Has some male authority figure taken over the iconography of the Minoan Great Seated Lady and called in no less than four geniuses to help? It is tempting to see the seated figure, not as a Great Seated Lady, but as a male mortal ruler who has subsumed her trappings and thus keeps the male sphere intact. That the figure has ringlets and wears a long gown is not a guarantee of being female in the Aegean. The seated shape is full but not overly so and there is no hint of a breast. The toast with the chalice is a one only gesture, thus consolidating the presentation of the special power that the figure wields. Still, it seems too great a leap in meaning change to see in the figure a male mortal, albeit an authority figure of supreme power, a reigning king, indeed the Mycenaean Wanax⁹ himself. An alternative reading may still allow the figure to be female and divine,

9 In the Linear B texts the ruler is the wa-na-ka, thus spelled in transliteration of the syllabic script.

and thus legitimately subsuming the Great Seated Lady iconography, but represent a new deity. Some clues may be found in the later wall paintings of the Cult Centre at Mycenae¹⁰. The composition in the upper section shows two figures of the same height and size facing each other¹¹. Both have ringlets and both are female if the white skin convention still holds. The figure on the right wears clothing in the Minoan style of a flounced skirt and bodice with breast showing. She holds out a staff resting on the ground in the power gesture. Thus, she is to be seen as a Lady deity evoking the power and status of the Minoan past. The figure on the left, who must also be a deity because of her equal height and size, wears a long rich gown and a hat without a plume similar to the seated figure in the Tiryns Ring. She holds a huge sword, point down, resting on the ground, surely a symbol of power and authority. The sword/dagger was brandished by deities in Minoan seal images but its positioning in this painting constitutes a new Mycenaean iconographic element. Between the staff and sword symbols, two small male figures, one black and one red, hover with hands outstretched towards the sword. They appear to be bringing the power from the goddess of the Minoan past and giving it with their outstretched hands to the gowned deity, or more particularly to her sword. Whatever the true meaning of these small figures, there is no doubt that they are iconographic heirs to the Epiphany Ladies and Lords of the Minoan tradition who were able to appear before mortals, gesturing to them as they appeared from on high. Is this painting an Investiture Scene? It certainly looks like a statement of divine mandate for the gowned female deity to rule and, if so, would be confirmation of the status of the Tiryns figure. Both the Mycenae and the Tiryns figures would thus place the Mycenaean state firmly within that group of warrior-oriented societies that choose a female deity to lead them and to personify victory as a spirit in female form. With a new dress, a new hat and a new gesture, the commanding figure in the Tiryns Ring may well be a new deity entering the male sphere as the personification of the new Mycenaean state and thus be deserving of a new name, the Mycenae Lady.

Composition in Mycenaean Wall Paintings

During the Late Period the seal iconographic repertoire diminishes further and the pre-eminent position of the seals in shaping the art has finished. Nevertheless, the earlier seal influences continue to shape composition and content. While the seal iconography has always been shared across various media, in the later Mycenaean world, the ivories and jewellery provide many of the small-scale examples while fresco/wall painting takes art to the grand scale. In the Mycenaean citadels extensive pictorial programs covered the walls, all of which owe their inspiration to the fresco/wall painting genre which began to burgeon in Minoan High Art¹². As we have seen, those Minoan fresco examples were themselves shaped in composition and content by the seal images. Thus, the Mycenaean wall paintings source their inspiration through the Minoan frescoes and also through the acceptance of Minoan iconography directly through the seals. The wall paintings from the Pylos Palace, so many of which were found *in situ*, are particularly revealing as to just how deep and how long-standing is the influence of the seal iconography. There are grand pictorial programs continued across several rooms which include the expected subjects like processions, hunts and battles, chariot scenes and looping rocks in the glen motif, animals that were once

10 The Cult Centre paintings have been extensively discussed. See Rehak, EIKON, 39-62; Immerwahr, AP 115-121; Morgan, AWP, 159-171.

11 Illustrated as a line drawing reconstruction, AWP, 167, Fig. 10.5.

12 At the citadel of Tiryns, wall paintings show women processing, hunt scenes with boars and hounds in the flying gallop and flying leap, chariot scenes and floral and spiraliform designs. The symbiotic relationship of flora and geometric designs which began in the Early Seal Period has a new lease of life in Mycenaean borders and all-over patterns. AP, 129-132, 143-144.

At the site of Mycenae, wall paintings, although often fragmentary, show processions, religious content and battle scenes. AP, 117, 118-121, 123-125.

signature animals in the Minoan repertoire like the hound, bird and dolphin, and sea creatures¹³. The discussion below concentrates on the paintings of the important rooms of the Vestibule and the Throne Room of the central megaron.

The Vestibule wall painting¹⁴ takes up the long-favoured *Icon* of procession and presents it in a double-tiered arrangement of gift bearers and a great bull. It is likely that the tiered arrangement actually portrays a procession moving two by two, as intimated in the earlier seal images. Bearers lead the procession in the company of an extremely tall figure who does not carry any gifts. They are followed by the bull which occupies the full height of the two tiers. Additional gift bearers follow in two tiers as before. The female bearers wear the flounced skirt and the male bearers a long robe or the kilt. The tall figure also wears a long robe, similar to, but more elaborate than, that worn by the male bearers. Reading that the size differential continues the Minoan idiom of being an indicator of importance and of divine status helps establish the identity of the bull and the tall figure. Here is a bull, so large in relation to the human figures that it must signify a god. This is none other than the Bull Lord in his avatar persona of the animal bull. The other figure who is so much larger than the gift bearers must also be of extreme importance. Since he is smaller than the bull and does not evidence any deity criteria he is a mortal and, taking such an important role in the procession, must be the leader of his people. All the iconographic details lead to the conclusion that this figure is the king, the Pylian Wanax, leading his people out from his megaron through the vestibule in ceremonial procession to honour the Bull Lord.

The Throne Room wall painting¹⁵ is particularly significant because of its position in the most important room of the megaron where the Pylian Wanax has his throne. The first panel shows the griffin and lion posed couchant on rocky ground in an up-dated version of the pair from the Fabulous Five. Their placement in this significant position no doubt suggests that these powerful creatures are at home in the palace of the Pylian Wanax. Does the griffin's wingless state mean that it will never again have to fly away from its Pylos home? Does its wingless state link this griffin to the one in the LM II Knossos Throne Room fresco, also wingless? The omission calls for explanation since the iconography of the winged griffin is so firmly established. The next panel is framed by rocky ground below and rocky ground above in the glen motif, indicating an outdoor setting. The main subject here is a huge bull which, like the great bull in the Vestibule painting, can be none other than the Bull Lord in his avatar persona of the animal bull. In the same panel there are human figures much smaller in size. The smallest are four banqueters in long robes sitting paired at two tables. On the right the rocky ground rises up to provide a striated boulder as a seat for a larger lyre player. A huge bird flies away from him out over the banqueters. So we have here the rocky ground/boulder, not as a seat for the Minoan Great Lady or for a boulder kneeler to hold, but as the seat for a bard to sing to a human audience. Who is the bard? Since he is seated on one of the most prestigious symbols of power it is hard to see him as mortal. Also, he is larger than the banqueters. He can only be a god of music who can play the lyre. Again, we see a transference of what was once female divine imagery into the sphere of a male god. The great bird still acts as the messenger bird but now it takes the divine bard's music and words out to humans.

Before leaving the Throne Room at Pylos, a note on the painted plaster floor is in order. Set out in a grid with alternating panels reflecting stone and textile patterns, the floor layout also uses a diagonal which, as Emily Egan has revealed, immediately directs the gaze of a person entering the room to the throne on the right hand wall¹⁶. One square in front of the throne shows a great octopus and this feature accords well with other marine themes used in palace wall paintings like the argonaut and the dolphin

13 AP, 117-118, 128, 132-133.

14 Illustrated as a line drawing, AWP Fig. 1.11.

15 Illustrated as a line drawing, AWP, Fig. 1.12. The Lyre Player is shown in a colour reconstruction which reveals the striations of his boulder seat, AP, Pl. XVIII.

16 Egan, 2016, 131-147.

friezes¹⁷. The pairing of wall painting pictorial programs featuring the bull and those featuring marine themes is notable at Pylos and finds other parallels, as discussed below.

Mycenaean Meanings

In the above survey into the detail of the shift from Minoan iconography into Mycenaean iconography in the Legacy Period, the seal designs reveal some general trends. There is an overall reduction in both the subject matter and the syntax of its portrayal. There is a move from naturalistic portrayals towards the static and the symbolic. There is an increasing concentration on the male. Then, by the Late Period, the seals have ceded their position as the primary art influencer to other media, especially to wall painting. As the Pylos examples indicate, the structure of the composition of the palace wall paintings is Minoan, begun long ago in the seal images and continued in the frescoes of Crete and Thera. However, the changes to Minoan idiom observable in these late Mainland creations show that the iconographic detail of the Minoan idiom has morphed into Mycenaean usage. No doubt there has also been a change to accommodate a Mycenaean mind-set although we may not be able fully to interpret the Mycenaean meaning. The instances noted above where the power of a Mycenaean Wanax may be depicted are a case in point. Whether it is the embodiment of that power in a new goddess figure or the portrayal of grand leadership in a religious procession, the variation in iconographic detail points to the type of ruler who would have been delighted to be listed as one of the four great kings of the world in the Hittite records.

Yet, there is one subject where the seals may be able to take the interpretation further and that is in matching text and image to identify the Bull Lord/bull avatar. Seals of the Legacy Period continue to show bull sports images even though the renditions are mostly incorrect when compared with LM I seal images. If the true subject of the bull sports is the bull avatar then we may have the reason for the continuance: it is to keep alive the memory of the earlier worship of the god which still resonates with the Mycenaean. Then there are the images where the bull or the bullman is joined by dolphins. In 14.40, 14.41 and 7.34¹⁸ a dolphin is shown with a bull while in 14.42 and 11.44 a bullman is shown with a dolphin. The dolphin is the signature animal of the deep ocean and the familiar of the Dolphin Lord. The juxtaposition of both bull and dolphin unites the two deities, Bull Lord and Dolphin Lord. Somewhat belatedly, we are given a clue that the Bull Lord and the Dolphin Lord are the same deity, the god of the earthquakes. The bull is the avatar of the earthquake god manifesting his destructive power on land. The dolphin is the signature animal of the earthquake god who can also wield his power in the destructive force of the tsunami from the sea. The Aegean peoples of the Bronze Age, and before, had already suffered numerous devastating events, none more so than the cataclysmic eruption of the volcano on the island of Thera in the Minoan High Art Period, which would have united the two god personas in their lived experience¹⁹.

In the texts written in Linear B, an early form of Greek, several deities, recognisable as the gods and goddesses of ancient Greece, are named. Poseidon is one of them. In the Pylos texts his name appears transliterated as po-se-da-o and he is a prominent deity who receives taxation dues²⁰. As we have just outlined above, the pictorial programs of the Pylos Palace feature the bull and sea creature themes. In

17 See Egan and Brecolaki on the argonaut and marine iconography at the Palace of Nestor, MWPIIC, 292-313.

18 Also in CMS VII 111 and CMS IX D24.

19 Recent seismic activity is recorded on the University of Athens website, <http://www.geophysics.geol.uoa.gr>. For a partial list of earthquakes and tsunamis in Greece in historic times, 2022 CE to 464 BCE, see the entry in Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_earthquakes_in_Greece. Where available, records of deaths and comments on the magnitude of the destructions are provided. These seismic statistics are frightening.

20 I thank Tom Palaima for his enlightening counselling on the difficulties of navigating the Linear B script. The Poseidon name is clear, as is his importance in the Pylos texts. There is also a Linear B epithet, transliterated as e-ne-si-da-o-ne, which has been linked to the later description, "earthshaker". However, this transliteration has both phonetic and grammatical problems. So, its link with Poseidon is not accepted by all scholars.

Greek myth and religion Poseidon is the god of the sea and of earthquakes. In Greek literature there are references that can be seen as the recognition of the link between the land earthquake and the sea tsunami. Homer, at the very beginning of the *Odyssey*, introduces Poseidon as the implacable enemy of Odysseus²¹. Thereafter, described by his epithet, “Earthshaker”, Poseidon uses all his power over the sea and waves to prevent Odysseus from coming home. When Telemachus, the son of Odysseus, visits Pylos where the King is Nestor, son of Neleus, who himself is a son of Poseidon, Homer provides a magnificent account of the Pylians sacrificing bulls to Poseidon on the seashore²². This is a ceremony in a specific location which may be interpreted as propitiation against the tsunami. The tragedian, Euripides, has Theseus, son of Poseidon, in avenging rage, call upon his father to destroy his son Hippolytos by sending a seamonster to attack him as he drives his chariot by the seashore. The monster is named as “the bull from the sea” and a long passage is devoted to describing it and its destructive power²³. Is this not the bull/dolphin of the seal images, the tsunami, rising in a great wave as it thunders down on the shore destroying all in its path? Yet, even earlier than these Greek legends are the Minoan myths of the Labyrinth and the ravaging Minotaur kept within it. In the Minoan High Art seal images, the Dolphin Lord carries a hammer axe and the Bull Lord is identified with his animal avatar. Both were clearly important gods. Still, there was no iconographic detail that actually identified the Bull Lord as the earthquake god and no iconographic detail that linked him with the Dolphin Lord. Perhaps we can now do that in retrospect, seeing Poseidon as a great and ancient Minoan god shaking the earth and controlling the ocean, as we await the excavation of more images and the confirmation of his Minoan name.

So, it is clear that there have been substantial shifts in the iconography away from Minoan art as we move into the Legacy Period and beyond that into the Late Period. Some of the most significant of these changes involve core Minoan subject matter involving the presentation of fantastic creatures and gods and the roles of humans. The artists continuing the seal production in Crete in the Legacy Period were not able to use many of their most characteristic iconographic *Icons* and elements while the artists of the Mainland reduced iconographic content and varied the Minoan idiom. Of the many indications of a Mycenaean take-over of Crete after the LM IB destructions, the removal of vital Minoan subjects from the iconographic record may well be the most telling. They are all gone: the kneeling the boulder and pulling the tree ceremonies, the monkey and the dragon, the many personas of the goddesses and gods and their interaction with women and men. There is no emphasis on earth, sky and sea forms, suggesting that the Mycenaean did not view the natural world as a sacred surround. The fascinating detail of flora, fauna and sea creatures has disappeared, with only a few remaining examples used in symbolic ways to reflect an earlier Minoan abundance. In symbolic terms the natural form of the boulder with its connotations of seismic awareness is replaced by the grand pillar which becomes the statement of structural integrity and, by extension, the safety of the Mycenaean citadel. The Lion Gate at Mycenae is the spectacular adoption of a seal image to make the grand political statement of supernatural lion power ensuring the security of the Mycenaean state. Winnowing the exotic, fantastic and hybrid creatures down to only three of the Fabulous Five – the lion, the griffin and the genius – increases their presence hugely. The sphinx joins them. The lion and griffin live a lusty life to the end, becoming emblems for the violence and aggression of their human counterparts. The genius transforms itself into a benevolent spirit guardian for humans and a favoured server to the gods. The sphinx grows in power and symbolism. For the life of mortals, the gender divide of a traditional society dictates that Mycenaean roles are somewhat similar to Minoan roles. The pious serving roles of women continue in processions and before shrines. The warrior/hunter roles for men remain. However, the equal sharing of protagonist roles in ceremony and social interaction is gone. Moreover, the powerful female presence of the Minoan Lady

21 *Odyssey*, Book I, Lines 19-26.

22 *Odyssey*, Book III, Lines 4-8.

23 *Hippolytos*, Lines 1198-1234.

deities is no longer felt. Images of a dominant male ruler, the Wanax, appear²⁴. This overview presents the Mycenaean point of view, allowing considerable indebtedness to the Minoans but also revealing the creativity of a people with a different mind-set.

²⁴ Jack Davis and Sharon Stocker give a detailed assessment of the formation of the Pylian State, Davis 2022.

Plates 14.1 to 14.56

The First Phase: Transference, Reception and Display

Mycenae, Grave Circles



14.1 – human head
(I 5/LB I)



14.2 – war duelling
(I 11/LH I)



14.3 – hunt duelling
(I 9 /LH I)

Vaphio, Tholos



14.4 – pulling the tree
(I 219/LM I)



14.5 – tusk helmet
(I 260/LB I-LB II)



14.6 – dealing with the catch
(I 224/LB I-LB II)

Mycenae, Chamber Tombs



14.7 – lions, curved altar
(I 46/LB I-LB II)



14.8 – dragons
(VS 1B 76/LB I-LB II)



14.9 – Lion Mistress
(I 144/LB I-LB II)

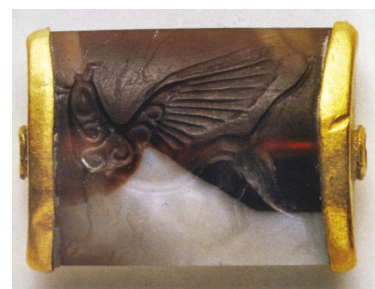
Pylos, Tholos and Palace



14.10 – hunter fallen, bull
(I 274/LB I-LB II)



14.11 – chasing, hound, stag
(I 363/LB I-LB II)



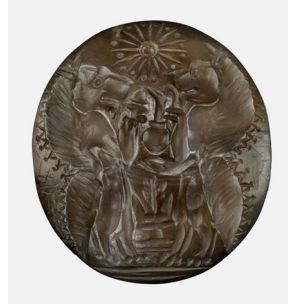
14.12 – griffin
(I 271/LB I-LB II)

The First Phase: Transference, Reception and Display

Pylos, Griffin Warrior Grave



gold signet



agate lentoid



gold signet



14.13 – leaper landing



14.14 – genius, altar, sunburst



14.15 – serving at the shrine



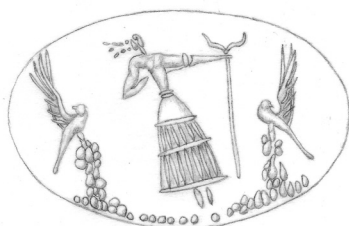
gold signet



agate amygdaloid



gold signet



14.16 – Bird Lady appearing



14.17 – war duelling (drawing of the seal)



14.18 – VIP granting audience

The Second Phase: Rejection, Continuity, Variation



14.19 – bull, palm tree
(I 57/LB II-LB IIIA1)



14.20 – animal crunching
(I 185/LB II-LB IIIA1)



14.21 – caring for young
(I 62/LB II)



14.22 – animal attack, animal suckling
(VS 1B 136/LB II-LB IIIA1?)



14.23 – bull sports
(VS 1B 135/LH IIIA1?)



14.24 – hunt duelling
(I 165/LB III A)



14.25 – serving at the altar
(I 279/LB II)



14.26 – serving at the shrine
(VS 1B 115/LB II-LB IIIA1)



14.27 – griffin chariot
(VS 1B 137/LB II-LB IIIA1)



14.28 – Agrimi Master
(I 163/LB IIIA1-LB IIIA2)



14.29 – Dolphin Mistress
(VS 1B 116/LB II-LB IIIA1)



14.30 – Bull Mistress, genius servers
(I 379/LB II-LB IIIA)

The Second Phase: Rejection, Continuity, Variation



14.31 – hunter, hound, boar
(I 294/LB II)



14.32 – processing, gesturing
(I 108/LH II-LB IIIA1)



14.33 – genius carrying the catch
(VS 1B 153/LB II-LB IIIA1)



14.34 – griffins, mirror reverse
(I 102/LB II-LB IIIA1)



14.35 – sphinx couchant displayed
(I 129/LB II-LB IIIA1)



14.36 – sphinxes, antithetical group
(I 87/LB II-LB IIIA1)



14.37 – sunburst, griffin, lion, argonaut,
dolphin? (I 329/LB II-LB IIIA1?)



14.38 – Lion Master
(VI 313/LB II-LB IIIA1)



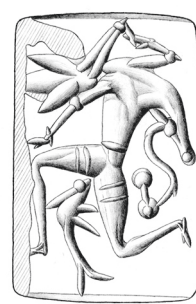
14.39 – sacrifice, palm tree
(XI 52/LH II-LH IIIA1)



14.40 – bull, dolphin
(XI 226/LH II-LH IIIA1)

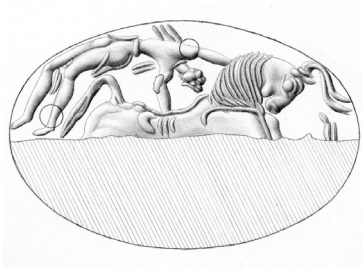


14.41 – bull, dolphin, bird
(VI 403/LB IIIA1-LB IIIA2)

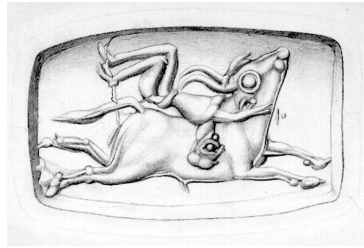


14.42 bullman, dolphin
(VS 3 223/LB II-LB IIIA1)

The Second Phase: Rejection, Continuity, Variation



14.43 – leaper somersaulting
(I 200/LB II-LB IIIA1)



14.44 – leaper falling
(V 674/LB IIIA1-LB IIIA2)



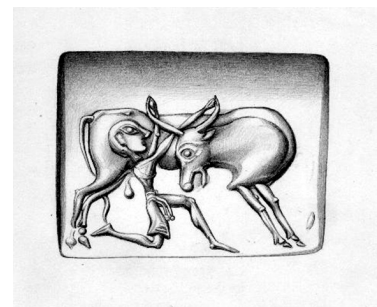
14.45 – leaper bulldogging
(I 95/LB II-LB IIIA1)



14.46 – leapers preparing, somersaulting
(VII 109/LB IIIA1-LB IIIA2)



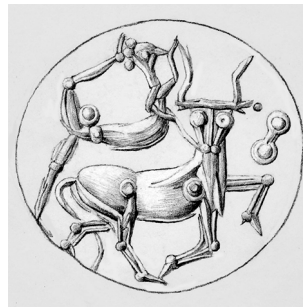
14.47 – leaper landing
(I 82/LB IIIA1-LB IIIA2)



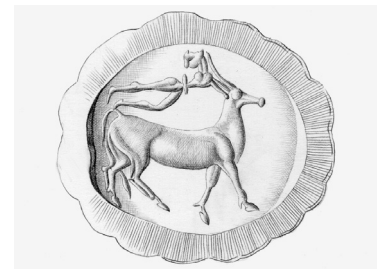
14.48 – leaper bulldogging
(II.3 105b/LB II-LB IIIA1?)



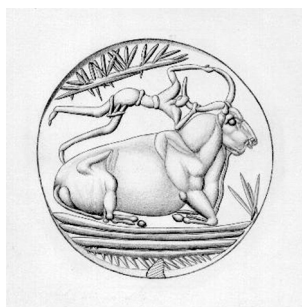
14.49 – leaper somersaulting
(V 517/LB II-LB IIIA1)



14.50 – leaper somersaulting
(VI 337/LB IIIA1-LB IIIA2)



14.51 – leaper somersaulting
(I 79/LB IIIA1)



14.52 – leaper somersaulting
(II.3 271/LB II-LB IIIA1)



14.53 – leaper somersaulting, two bulls
(V 597/LB IIIA1-LB IIIA2)



14.54 – leaper somersaulting, agrimi
(V 638/LB I-LB II?)

The Mycenae Ring and the Tiryns Ring



14.55 – VIP granting audience
(Mycenae Ring, I 17/LB I-LB II)



14.56 – VIP granting audience
(Tiryns Ring, I 179/LB II)

CONCLUSION

THE PRIMACY OF THE SEALS

Chapter 15 Prized Possession, Original Iconography, Seminal Art

At the end of a very long book full of detailed discussion, how have my readers fared? The museum visitor is probably still somewhat overwhelmed, as she was when first looking at all those seals in the Herakleion Museum. Still, I hope that I have been able to convey something of the thousand and more years of artistic production and iconographic variety – not to mention appreciation of the beauty of these exquisite gems. For the international scholar who already knows some of this, I hope that I have provided new insights into the material. I trust that the exposition on the art of the seals in Chapters 1 to 3 has made it easier to understand the images. I trust that the opening sections of the thematic treatment of the subject matter assisted by the IconAegean Databases in Chapters 4 to 12 have made the iconography accessible as never before. I cannot say if either the museum visitor or the international scholar has ventured with me into the interpretation sections of these Chapters, culminating in Chapters 13 and 14. If they have so ventured, I cannot say whether they agree with my interpretations of the images. However, I do claim to have argued everything out of the iconographic detail which the Aegean artists have bequeathed to us. The iconographic arguments adduced here are integral to a comprehensive schema of Aegean glyptic iconography, the terms holding across all seals, signets and sealings and into the wider art of the Aegean koine. So, let us review what has been achieved by this iconographic analysis of Aegean seal images and ponder what insights have been revealed of life and society in the Minoan and Mycenaean worlds by this focus on the seal medium.

The Achievements of this Iconographic Analysis

1. A multitude of seal images, ordered thematically and copiously illustrated, is now accessible.
2. A comprehensive theory of Aegean art, the *Icon* Theory, has been proposed.
3. The IconAegean Vocabulary has been created to facilitate iconographic discussion.
4. The IconAegean Databases have been created to search the seal corpus on iconographic detail.
5. The meaning of the seal images has been explored in the absence of contemporary descriptions.

Having access to such a large number of seal images ordered by thematic content and copiously illustrated is a boon to readers and researchers alike. The drawings in the opening sections of Chapters 4 to 12 and the colour photographs of Chapters 1 to 3 and 13 to 15, together with the descriptions of their content, comprise a “book within a book”, an easily accessible iconography reference manual. In the early days of discovering the Aegean Bronze Age world, seals and signets were published mostly as archaeological artefacts and/or precious items. At that time only a few seals appeared in publications and often it was the same few seals which kept on being illustrated. Subsequently, the systematic publication of the seals by the CMS, in print and online, has provided a comprehensive black and white photographic record which includes line drawings of the impressions/sealings. This means that, following the release of *CMS VI* in 2009, over 10,000 images sourced from all major collections are available to be consulted. However, the images are not ordered iconographically across the Corpus (see below). Accordingly, it has been very difficult for readers and researchers to gather like-themed images or to view the whole range of subject matter across the long floruit of seal production. In Chapters 4 to 12 the seal impression line-drawing examples are placed in thematic context from earth forms, through flora and fauna, to the exploits of mortals and on to the supernatural realms of fantastic and hybrid creatures and deities.

The first sections of these nine Chapters are a valuable resource where readers and researchers can turn the pages and gain immediate access to the images and their detail. A bonus is the inclusion of colour photographs of the seals in Chapters 1 to 3 and 13 to 15. Rarely are the seals shown in colour in any number. So, placing on these pages the rainbow that is the seals allows all to gain a much better understanding of the seal corpus and the seal artists. Whatever readers and researchers make of the later interpretative sections, the value of this “book within a book” remains.

Chapters 2 and 3 expound a comprehensive theory of Aegean art, the *Icon Theory*. Although there has been much discussion of Minoan and Mycenaean art since the Aegean Bronze Age finds began to appear, there has, to date, been no theory that has been able to gather together all the seemingly disparate features. To understand the art, scholars first turned to pottery and the frescoes. They worked with the grand designs of the Phaistos Style and Palace Style repertoires while the motifs on Mycenaean pottery were also analysed in detail. In recent decades researchers have concentrated on the frescoes/wall paintings, reviewing the early reconstructions of the Knossos finds in the light of the extensive Thera and then Pylos compositions. Yet, for all the insights that emerged from these studies, an inclusive art theory has proved elusive. So, it seems that, all along, we have been looking in the wrong place to find our inspiration, or we have been looking in periods too late to reveal our source. When we focus on the seals and begin in prepalatial times, we begin to see why the Minoan artists took those particular compositional decisions. They shared with their community a need to discern the essential nature of things and worked with the size and shape of the seal face to create compositions of clarity and power. This book places the creation of Aegean art in the prepalatial seals and sees all major developments achieved, either in full or in embryo, within the seal medium by the end of the protopalatial period.

A standard vocabulary, the IconAegean Vocabulary, has been created to facilitate discussion of the iconography. The lack of a precise vocabulary has long plagued Aegean art research. In Chapter 2 we commented on the use of some of the fanciful names which were misleading and on the duplication of terms for the one entity. To some extent these problems of nomenclature are a concomitant of having no translated literature to provide the names that the Minoans gave to their surroundings, to themselves and to their gods. In addition, there are no contemporary descriptive texts accompanying the images in Minoan or Mycenaean art. We have termed this the Aegean silence. Other artistic traditions of the ancient world do not have this problem, drawing, as they do, on the translated hieroglyphic or cuneiform texts which surround the images in their art. The IconAegean Vocabulary which provides descriptive terms for subject matter and concise terms for artistic composition has been widely available since the publication of *The Iconography of Aegean Seals* in 2013 as *Aegaeum* 34. Many of the descriptive terms for content have not occasioned much comment, since they were already in scholarly use, but specific art terms like *Icon* and climactic point, as well as the new names for deities like Dolphin Lord and Great Lady, have caused some consternation. Yet, the descriptive titles for figures assigned here will help until, if ever, the subject matter of Aegean art can be directly associated with contemporary texts that reveal their true names and the stories that go with them. For the first time in this book, the IconAegean Vocabulary has been systematically employed to conduct analyses of art and iconography. It can be seen how useful it is in achieving precision and avoiding periphrasis. Perhaps better choices might have been made for some of these names and terms but, in the absence of any other standard vocabulary, the IconAegean Vocabulary provides a functional vehicle for enhanced iconographic discussions.

The creation of the IconAegean Databases allows the searching of the CMS Corpus on iconographic detail. This has not previously been possible. The CMS was founded in 1958 and since then it has systematically published, and is still publishing, all the seals in both print and database form. However, as noted in Chapter 1, the only viable method of publication division was to devote a *Volume* to each Museum seal collection. For iconographic studies this division has no meaning. The problem is further compounded by having various different authors of the earlier *Volumes* who each described the images in their own terms. In the later *Volumes*, and in the CMS Database, this variety of description was curtailed by the CMS Staff's regularisation of some of the terms. However, until now, it was impossible to search across the whole seal Corpus except by reading each separate image description and then comparing the

text against the image itself and in relation to other images and their text description. This extremely time-consuming endeavour has, of course, been undertaken by seal experts and by scholars searching for particular comparisons and they will continue to do so. However, there is no doubt that the absence of a standard vocabulary and the lack of a convenient searching mechanism has constrained iconographic research and certainly has prevented a wider appreciation of the riches of the seal images. The IconAegean Databases solve both these problems. Capturing the *Icon* compositions in the IconAegean Vocabulary, as set out in the IconADict Database and in the hierarchical schema of the IconAegean Database, has provided new tools for discussing the iconography. The IconAegean descriptions complement the visual CMS records and allow systematic searching of the iconography across those CMS records. It is a pleasing result that, when the IconAegean Vocabulary is employed to describe the iconography, all the polyvalent elements work together with no discordant notes. The IconADict Database explains the terms of the IconAegean Vocabulary and shows their use in describing the seal images within a searchable format. The Key Words for searching are the terms of the IconAegean Vocabulary. The IconAegean Database provides iconographic access to the whole CMS Corpus. Thus, the whole Corpus can now be searched for iconographic detail. A bonus comes with sorting the entries on the IconA Code field. This action places all 10,972 CMS images in iconographic order, a first for Aegean iconography.

The meaning of the seal images has been explored in the absence of contemporary descriptions. Recognising the limitations imposed by the Aegean silence, this analysis has based its findings firmly on the primary visual material. The interpretations sections in Chapters 4 to 12 and in Chapters 13 and 14 have postulated identities for creatures and human figures and proposed meanings for ceremonies and gestures. It might not have been possible to bring all my readers with me in these arguments but I would say, in answer to their hesitations, that everything has carefully been argued out of the iconographic detail. Further, the iconographic arguments used here are ones that are standard across all iconographic research. I have simply applied them systematically to the Aegean material. In many ways, it is a traditional assessment of the iconography proposing a Minoan love of the natural world and a Mycenaean predilection for emblematic and symbolic displays. Yet, I have given the reader much more than an exercise in iconographic analysis and a repeat of earlier identifications. Nowhere is this so true as in the commentary on the gods. For many years, there has been a general consensus among scholars that the small hovering figures are epiphanies and that the large female seated in a special place is a goddess. I concur with these, and with other similar, identifications. Yet, in both the specificity and the number of deities, this paper claims new insights because the images of the gods have been identified according to strict iconographic rules. The methodology proposed here and its rigorous application to all the seals, signet and sealings have resulted in identifying an Aegean Pantheon which is not based on personal predilection but on observable detail and logical argument.

Sustained Creativity across the Centuries

One cannot overstate the achievement of being the creative medium for more than a thousand years! The response of the seal artist to living in the Aegean world created an art tradition spanning some 1500 years from c.2700 to c.1200, with the seals being the creative iconographic medium for the fourteen centuries to c.1300. The first 1250 years comprise the Early Seal, Experimentation and Minoan High Art Periods. In these Periods the creative impetus was Minoan and centred in Crete. It culminated with a great flourish in Minoan High Art at the time of the second palaces when the appreciation of a sophisticated society valued artistic creation. This was also the period when Minoan influence was felt strongly on the Mainland as the Mycenaean princes began to establish their states. The LM IB destructions of c.1440 brought an end to this successful era and to the Minoan artistic impetus. After the destructions, seals continued to be made in Crete but much of the creative vitality was gone. On the Mainland the seals continued to inspire the iconographic repertoire as it adapted to Mycenaean tastes in the Legacy Period. Some time before c.1300 the cutting of hard stone seals ceased, the cessation no doubt related to the final destruction of the Mycenaean-occupied Knossos palace c.1340. Subsequently, the role of the seals as a

driver of iconographic creation also ceased and, in the Late Seal Period, artistic creativity was sourced in other media down to the destructions of c.1200. By the end of the Mycenaean era, it is the wall paintings that most clearly reveal the Mycenaean indebtedness to Minoan inspiration but also their very different mind-set. While keeping the structures of Minoan art composition largely intact, the Mycenaeans made significant changes to the subject matter content to suit their own customs and beliefs. During this last century there was no role for seals as either artistic inspiration or as important point of power display although some heirloom seals remained in use to stamp palace records. The proud seal tradition begun so long ago had come to an end.

For some 1400 of the 1500 years of activity, the seal tradition was the wellspring of artistic and iconographic creation, first for the Minoans and then for the Mycenaeans drawing on the Minoan creations. Here again the seal record helps in establishing the major iconographic advances. The Phaistos Sealings, published as CMS II.5 in 1970, and the LM I Sealings from the Cretan sites, published as II.7 in 1998, CMS II.6 in 1999 and II.8 in 2002, testify to originals now lost, but through the very act of performing their sealing duty, they provide some of the finest images. The Phaistos Sealings reveal the iconography in use at the end of MM II c.1700, a selection illustrated in 1.52 to 1.66. They remind us that there has already been a thousand years of seal development in which all the compositional features of the art, based on the *Icon*, had been created and virtually all the subject matter content had been initiated. The LM I Sealings reveal the iconography in use at the high point of the second palaces before the c.1440 destructions and remind us of the sophisticated level of production of the Minoan High Art Period, as in the bull sport selection 9.157 to 9.168. In both the protopalatial and the neopalatial eras, the sealings are a measure of the contemporary art of the other media since they are securely dated as in use in the Period and provide a wide coverage of iconographic detail, regularly with compositions intact. Iconographic discussions published before the Phaistos Sealings and the LM I Sealings were available need to be reviewed for accuracy since the writers at that time did not have the benefit of being able to consult these images. Discussions and reconstructions of compositions in the other media should always take account of the seal iconographic record.

The Aegean Koine of the Late Bronze Age

The Aegean koine refers to an identifiable cultural and artistic milieu seen throughout the Aegean sphere in the Bronze Age. It is most clearly discernible in the Late Bronze Age and, in the sphere of art, it refers to the sharing of both subject matter and compositional formulas. While we have begun our iconographic coverage with EM II c.2700, there have been shared iconographic motifs earlier like the spiraliform designs seen across the Balkan peninsula and into the Aegean islands and Crete. Then Crete began its thousand-year development of art and iconography until the end of the first palaces and continued its artistic achievements during the time of the second palaces. The Minoan artistic tradition became so strong and all-encompassing that it inspired other Aegean peoples within its sphere. The peak of this influence came during the time of the second palaces when seals in the Minoan idiom are found as far as Samothrace while frescoes in the Minoan idiom are painted on fine buildings on Aegean Islands like Thera, Melos and Kea and at Bodrum in Turkey. Thera is a special case in that it appears to be the island city most thoroughly integrated into Minoan ways and thus provides much of the evidence for Minoan art of the Late Bronze Age. Preserved in the volcanic ash, remains of a Bronze Age town survive, some of the buildings still standing three storeys high. Small items are there, including pottery, seals and sealings, but it is the frescoes remaining on the walls that have excited wonder and comment for the past fifty years. Placing images like that of the Goddess Fresco beside the seal images of Minoan High Art shows how completely integrated the iconography was across the media, including ivory carving, relief vases, gold work and jewellery. Pottery shared in a more limited repertoire, continuing the love of floral and plant forms and marine life but rarely portraying animals or human figures. During the Mycenaean ascendancy the iconographic repertoire was reduced but the Mycenaean adaptations of the remaining

subject matter continued the Aegean koine. When the Mycenaean citadels finally fell, the pottery, wall paintings and sealings remained to tell us of the artistic heritage of the whole Aegean area.

The primary role of Minoan art in developing the Aegean koine has always been accepted but now we can acknowledge the seminal role of the seals within that. What has also emerged from this study is that not all Minoan iconography transferred abroad. Many of the memorable *Icons* and strong elements were accepted and found their way into the koine but many did not, as the contrasting cases of Thera, which absorbed so much, and Mycenae, which was highly selective, indicate. It is time to review the composition of the artistic koine in each period. The nuances of what is included and what is not will be one of its most revealing studies.

From the East and to the East

Throughout the book, as various elements and themes were discussed, reference has been made to the relationship between Aegean art and that of the two great traditions to the east, Egyptian art and Mesopotamian art. The transference of eastern motifs into the Aegean has been noted with celestial signs, the double horns, exotic and fantastic creatures, various heraldic poses and antithetical group compositions. When a motif or an idea was taken over from the grand artistic traditions to the east, it always resulted in an idiosyncratic solution to recast the import into Minoan idiom. The complete assimilation and Aegean re-fit of the Fabulous Five is a striking example of this eastern influence. At two points Minoan images are accepted into the eastern traditions. In the Middle Bronze the links between Crete and Mesopotamia surface in the grand wall paintings at the Palace of Zimri Lim at Mari on the Euphrates. Running spiral designs frame the Investiture Fresco while marbling patterns are shown on floors. In 18th Dynasty Egypt, Aegean animal poses are in favour with the flying gallop, flying leap and reverse twist being used in wall paintings and in repousse works. These lively animal poses also appear in Syrian cylinder seals. These successful adoptions of Minoan motifs have two things in common. They are artistic innovations with no equivalent designs in the east and they are free from religious/cultural connotations. These two factors enabled their adoption in the east by artists who saw their artistic merit and welcomed the possibilities of expanding their own repertoire with such vibrant images. Similar choices were no doubt made when it came to including various Aegean motifs in the International Repertoire and the International Style seen in the east in the Late Bronze Age. What the Minoans do not take from the east is revealing. None of the grand images of kingship from either tradition moves west. There is no smiting figure sacrificing prisoners, no winged sundisk, no insignia of royalty. The fact that the sphinx has a delayed welcome into Mycenaean art may well signify that the Mycenaean had a different view of the power of a monarch, more akin to Egypt than to Minoan Crete.

In my 1989 book, *The Aegean and the East*, I proposed four eras of contact coinciding in Crete with the pre-palatial, protopalatial and neo-palatial periods and then in LH IIIA-B with the Mycenaean expansion. These eras of contacts still provide the most evidence for artistic transference, as seen in the more recent finds from excavations at Tell Kabri in Israel and Tel d'Aba in Egypt. However, just as the trade routes were never truly forgotten, the memory of art might well have remained continuously in people's consciousness even though we cannot trace it from this distance in time. In the light of this seal study, which has been able to take account of the extensive evidence of the pre-palatial and proto-palatial seal images, some changes to the timing need to be made. Inspiration from the east came much earlier than has previously been recognised. At the beginning of the Early Seal Period, the monkey, lion, griffin and dragon entered the art along with papyrus, palm and palmette designs. In celebration of Helene Kantor's 1947 seminal publication, *The Aegean and the Orient in the Second Millennium*, a Symposium was held under the same name at Cincinnati in 1997 and published as *Aegaeum 18* in 1998. The Symposium was able to ponder the advances in understanding the Bronze Age interconnections in the fifty years since the Kantor publication. Although it is not yet fifty years from the Cincinnati Symposium, perhaps it is already time to plan another such international conference on the same topic in order to gather all the new excavation and iconographic evidence for cross-cultural inspiration.

Remembering Minoan Crete and Mycenaean Greece

We began the enquiry in this book with a warning of how hard it would be to interpret the images of Aegean art because of the Aegean silence. Minoan texts are not yet translated and Minoan art does not place accompanying texts around the images to help explain the meaning. For Mycenaean art we do have the translations of Linear B texts but we have a similar problem in that the texts are not placed beside the images to describe the subject matter and, of themselves, they provide little descriptive comment which can be used to identify motifs in the images. On the other hand, we have been graced with the most amazing iconography delivered to us by the hands of the Aegean artists who have succeeded in rendering visual the world around them and the mind of their people by creating such memorable images. Can we marry the two without explicit placement of text and image side by side? Can we even look back to earlier images with the descriptions in later texts in our hands? The Venice Aegaeum Conference, MNEME Past and Memory in the Aegean Bronze Age, was held in 2018 and published as *Aegaeum 43* in 2019. The many papers offered explanations of how the memory of past events, distant places and vanished constructs can be handed down to later generations in the understanding that the memory can be very long indeed. From the years before the first prepalatial seals were cut down to Classical Greece is a significant expanse of time for tales to be transmitted. Yet, for someone who lives in a country where the people have handed down their stories and songlines for tens of thousands of years, something under three thousand years does not seem very long at all. Story, myth, legend and eventually the written word are vital routes of transference but so are the actual artefacts recovered from the past and held in the hand to view again. Traces of the original iconographic content may be preserved in the words of poems only to be resurrected by later artists who may produce new offerings that nevertheless are very close to the originals of centuries before. Artefacts like the seals, long hidden in burials, may be found by later generations and their bold images may recall pieces of the folklore story and go on to inspire a new generation of artists.

We have seen from the Linear B texts that the Classical Poseidon already had his identity as a great god firmly established in the Bronze Age. If we are correct in seeing the Dolphin Lord of 13.48 and the Bull Lord of 13.47 as two personas of Poseidon, then he already has his Earthshaker identity as the god of the high seas with its tsunami potential in the bull from the sea and as the god of the seismic destruction of the land with his bull avatar. What other images from the Bronze Age might have informed later art? Can we see in the many lion hunts like 14.3 or the Lion Master of 2.24 a presaging of the image of Herakles slaying the Nemean lion? Is the Triple Bud Rod Lord of 13.45 really a Hermes Psychopompos? Is the story of Europa being carried off by the bull a reflection of the Dragon Lady riding her fantastic familiar as in 1.47 and 13.41? Looking forward in time from the Bow Lady and the Bow, can we see Artemis and Apollo? An enquiry into these possible sources may be very profitable as increasingly the continuity from Bronze Age into Iron Age and later is explored.

Another area where a new approach with images can be taken is the Minoan hieroglyphic script. For the best of reasons, the CHIC authors gave each sign an identification number rather than attempting to name it by its visual representation. Now that we have seen that various signs have a parallel life as symbols in the art, we need to look again at their appearance in places other than texts and also when one sign is used by itself. The eye (CHIC 005) is a hovering symbol, the ewer (CHIC 053) with its variation the spouted ewer (CHIC 052) and the vase (CHIC 054) are special objects, the double axe (CHIC 042) is one of the main constructed symbols and the importance of the bee (CHIC 020) is clearly evident in the cultscapes with beehives and the pulling the tree ceremony. These six images are simply the easiest to compare. However, all signs need to be investigated to identify, if possible, the items which inspired their shape, to document the appearance of these items in artistic contexts and to probe their meaning.

The *Icon* Essence (Plates 15.1 to 15.31)

So, we return to the seal owner and to the seal artist and the community in which they lived. The seal images have summonsed us to look deeply at life lived in Crete and Mainland Greece in the Bronze Age. These are the images which show how the peoples wished to view themselves within the everyday world and in the light of the supernatural world. Their record has been arresting in its visual display and surprisingly encompassing in its subject matter. With acute observation and great imagination, the seal artist has not only reflected back to the owner commissioning her/his seal and to the wider community the real world and its supernatural surround but has also shaped the visualisation of both. The seal images give the widest span of subject matter of all the art media and show us subjects we cannot find elsewhere. Without the seals we would not know of the overwhelming importance of animals or be able to fully appreciate the vital role of exotic and fantastic creatures. We would not know the extent of the depictions of the Mistress of Animals and Master of Animals, or of the human hybrids, the birdwoman and bullman. We would not have such a convincing exposition of the bull sports or know the significance of the kneeling the boulder and pulling the tree ceremonies.

We have been able to trace the development of image design across the long floruit of the seals. Now that we know it is the seals that create the structure of the art, the final piece of the art history jigsaw fits into place. The problems that the early researchers had in trying to unite the various, apparently disparate, strands of Aegean art into a convincing whole are now solved. They were looking in the wrong places for the source of the art – in the pottery designs which have limited subject matter and in the frescoes which came too late upon the scene. It is the seal images that are the source. Reflecting the constraints of size and face shape within which the seal artist had to work, the art is both patterned and emblematic, both naturalistic and formal, full of vital human and animal action, yet always controlled by design concepts and compositional devices. Along with the subject matter these structural forms of seal design came across to the other art media, their traces recognisable to the end of the era. For the reader here, viewing that visual record, we have been able to explain the art of the seal image through the inspired creation that is the *Icon* and to describe the iconography in the IconAegean Classification using 590 terms. The *Icon* Theory of Aegean art sets the *Icon* as the compositional imperative of seal design. The *Icon* is the memorable image compounded out of element and syntax. From the 125 *Icons* which control image composition I have chosen thirty-two of the most memorable to provide both a thematic summary of Minoan iconography and a review of the iconographic analysis undertaken in this book. These thirty-two *Icons*, discussed in the order of their illustration in Plates 15.1 to 15.31, are tree growing from rocky ground, celestial sign, spiraliform, script sign, single flora, multiple flora, animal resting, animal flying leap, bird flying, animal caring for young, animal crunching, dolphin leaping, sailing ship, animals at the grand pillar, hovering symbol, serving at the shrine, war duelling, leaper somersaulting, beehive with bees, pulling the tree, animal standing, carrying the special object, hybrid woman, hybrid man somersaulting, Mistress of Animals, Master of Animals, VIP with familiar, gesturing, VIP appearing on high, VIP granting audience, kneeling the boulder and human couple. Assembling these *Icons* across the seals, signets and sealings 15.1 to 15.31 also provides the opportunity to take an overview of the element and syntax parts composing the *Icon* and then their coalescing into the memorable *Icon* itself.

The 340 elements that constitute the *Icons* are also memorable in themselves, created boldly. The earth forms of land, water and sky are ever-present. Rocky ground is seen in 15.1, 15.16, 15.19 and 15.20 as rocks and boulders while a rocky glen frames the Master in 15.26 and a Staff Lady stands on a rocky mountain in 15.28. Dolphins leap past a rocky wateredge in 15.12, the sunburst shines above a cultscape in 15.2 and a skyline is marked in 15.15. The bounty of nature flourishes early in plants like the lily, rosette, quatrefoil, palm/palmette and papyrus as in 15.3 to 15.6 and more naturalistically in the flower fields of the cultscapes in 15.15 and 15.16. The tree in its many forms becomes a symbol, identifying a tree shrine as in 15.2 and 15.29, while the associated beehive and bees as in 15.1, 15.19 and 15.20 remind of the desired pollination. Geometric elements like the S spiral and vierpass spiral and petaloid are seen in 15.3 and 15.4, only to disappear from the seal repertoire but to inspire later

jewellery, ivory and fresco designs, especially borders. Land and sea animals are bursting with life, with their distinctive characteristics always rendered sensitively, whether at rest as with the agrimi in 15.7, in distress as with the stag in 15.11 or with the power of the leaping dolphin as in 15.12. Four become signature animals for their own domain and/or as identifying familiars for deities: the Wild Agrimi, the Faithful Hound, the Messenger Bird and the Leaping Dolphin, as seen in 15.1, 15.7 to 15.9, 15.12 and 15.26. The constructed environment yields numerous elements and symbols equally memorable. There are major constructions like the ship as in 15.13, the shrine as in 15.2, 15.16, 15.28 and 15.29 and structures like the grand pillar of 15.14, 15.29 and 15.30 and the double horns atop buildings as in 15.16 and 15.28. Of the set of twelve special objects, ten are made by hand like the cloak knots hanging from the grand pillar in 15.14, the double axe and horn bows of the headdress of the Mistress in 15.25 and the panoply in the right curve of the bezel in 15.20. The specialist grouping of the ten hovering symbols are recorded here by the double axe with scarf, the piriformshape and the grainshape as in 15.1, 15.15, 15.20 and 15.31. Exotic and fantastic creatures inhabit and define the supernatural world. The Fabulous Five which ultimately came from the east are thoroughly re-imagined for an Aegean domicile. The dragon, griffin and lion are familiars of deities. The monkey is a server in 15.30 and the griffin and the lion both share symbolic roles as protectors of the grand pillar as in 15.14. The lion, griffin and genius have powerful presences as seen in 15.11, 15.21, 15.22, 15.25 and 15.28. The spirit world is best exemplified by the birdwoman as in 15.23 and the bullman as in 15.24. The Great Gods provide memorable images like the Bull Lord in his avatar form of 15.18, the Lion Mistress of 15.25, the Hound Master and Mighty Lord of 15.26, the Lion Lord of 15.27, the Staff Lady of 15.28, the Epiphany Lord and Staff Lord of 15.29 and the Great Seated Lady of 15.30.

The 90 syntax constructions allow the artist to present the elements as clearly as possible in view of the constraints of the size and shape of the seal face. The overall composition is set out by one of the eleven design concepts: decorative, writing, talismanic, focus, frieze, stage, mountain view, landscape, townscape, seascape and cultscape. The decorative is seen in 15.3 and 15.5 and writing in 15.4. The focus is used to great advantage with sole subject images like 15.7 to 15.9, 15.18, 15.21, 15.22 to 15.24 and 15.27. The stage concept handles most of the scenes of peaceful human activity as in 15.1, 15.2, 15.16, 15.19, 15.20 and 15.28 to 15.30. The much less used mountain view concept is seen in 15.15. The imaginative developments in presenting scenes to enable maximum iconographic detail without sacrificing clarity are particularly clearly seen in the cultscape compositions as in 15.1, 15.2, 15.15, 15.16, 15.19, 15.20 and 15.28 to 15.31. Then there are ten compositional devices. Radiation and symmetry are seen in the early seals 15.3 and 15.5. The antithetical group is used extensively for the concise presentation of important themes as in 15.14 and 15.28 and with the Mistress of Animals as in 15.25 and the Master of Animals in 15.26. Various groundline forms anchor scenes while the curve fit is seen to advantage with the tree growing from rocky ground arching over the boulder kneeler in 15.1 and 15.31. In scenes of war and the hunt the special effects of diagonal play and the climactic point concentrate the violence, as with the mortal combat of the two warriors in 15.17. Heraldic poses allow variety yet precision in the depiction of animals and fantastic creatures as in 15.7, 15.14, 15.21 and 15.25 to 15.27. The innovative and distinctive Aegean animal poses extend the possibilities for presentation of the animal body in action, in joy or in trauma. The flying gallop and the flying leap are regularly used to show the power and speed of the animal, as with the bull in 15.18 and the agrimia in 15.8. The reverse twist turns the front half of the animal body in reverse. This is the quintessentially Minoan pose, rarely used correctly by other than Minoan artists.

The 125 *Icons* are created when the artist melds element and syntax, enhancing the details to produce the most memorable images. In 15.1 the cultscape is composed of five *Icons* including the tree growing from rocky ground in the right curve of the bezel. The joining of the symbol of the sacred fertile earth with the plant symbol of the flourishing tree produces a symbol of double potency which overshadows the boulder kneeler here and in 15.31 and becomes the focus of the ceremony of pulling the tree in 15.19 and 15.20. In 15.2 there are four *Icons* including the celestial sign *Icon* of the sunburst. This is the most used of the celestial signs and comes to be a symbol in its own right. In 15.3 to 15.6 the spiraliform

and flora *Icons* complement each other, just as they intimate the deep geometric structure of vibrant plant life. In 15.4 we are reminded of the visual impact of the script sign *Icons*, some of which enjoy a later life as special objects or hovering symbols. In 15.7 to 15.11 we see five *Icons* from the group of thirty *Icons* developed to express the life of land animals, by far the most popular subjects in figurative seal images. The animal resting in *Icon* in 15.7 summarises all the images of animals in their characteristic form at rest while the animal flying leap *Icon* recalls all the vibrant Aegean animal action poses. The bird flying in 15.9 and its associated *Icons* of bird rising and bird staying remind us just how important the bird is. In 15.10 the animal caring for young, along with the associated animal suckling and animal mating *Icons*, allows the theme of fecundity to be explored with some tenderness. The opposite is true of the animal crunching *Icon* in 15.11 where the theme of predation is explored, exposing all the power and violence of the predator and the agony and terror of the prey. Similar images result in the other *Icons* of the predation set and sequence, like animal distressed and animal contorted. The *Icon* of dolphin leaping in 15.12 sums up the power and beauty of this sea mammal and links it to the many sea creature *Icons* which reveal such close observation of life in the realm of the sea. In 15.13 the sailing ship *Icon*, from early times to the end, testifies to the close Minoan relationship with the sea. In 15.14 the animals at the grand pillar *Icon* takes the eastern motif of animals at the tree of life and gives it an Aegean cast and an Aegean meaning. Its parallel *Icon*, animals at the curved altar, reveals a similar Aegeanisation. Of the four *Icons* controlling the image in 15.15 we note the hovering symbol *Icon*. Seen also in 15.1, 15.20, 15.30 and 15.31, the hovering symbol is one of the most important symbolic creations within the cultscape assemblage. In 15.16 the serving at the shrine *Icon* can be paired with the serving at the altar *Icon* to stress the importance of respectful observance at their cult places of shrine and altar by the Minoans, almost always led by women and indicating one of their most significant roles in Minoan life. In 15.17 the war duelling *Icon* is one of the most confronting of all the violent images. Together with its twin, the hunt duelling *Icon*, and with the associated *Icons* in the hunt and war set and sequence, the disciplined life of a Minoan man is explored as he trains to face death. This is also the case in 15.18 with the leaper somersaulting *Icon* where the leaper worships the Bull Lord in his avatar form. In the bull sports set and sequence the leaper can fail and die as the leaper fallen, his crumpled body here recalling the parallels of the hunter fallen and warrior fallen *Icons*. In 15.19 the beehive with bees *Icon* is seen in the left curve of the bezel with the bees flying across to the tree canopy above. In 15.20 the *Icon* of pulling the tree records the important spring pollination ceremony as also in 15.19. In 15.21 the animal standing *Icon*, created for real land mammals, presents the griffin as if this fantastic creature lives a normal life in this world. However, it is in its role as the great predator that the griffin even more clearly blurs the interface between the two worlds, bringing the supernatural into daily experience. In 15.22 the genius is seen in the *Icon* of carrying the special object where the special object is the ewer, thus presenting in his original and primary role. Yet, his roles are widened in Minoan High Art and he comes to act like a human and, by substitution, a deity. In the hybrid human *Icons* of 12.23 and 12.24 the power of the spirit world is immanent although their exact meaning is elusive. The striking Mistress of Animals and Master of Animals *Icons* in 15.25 and 15.26 are to be read as codified statements of the Great Gods who are, at other times, portrayed separately as VIP deities. The Great Gods may be shown individually in serene pose in the VIP full figure *Icon* but also in the distinctive VIP with familiar *Icon* as in 15.27 with the Lion Lord. What a statement of majesty and power with the god in long kilt and tasselled pointed hat controlling his magnificent lion by touch on the rump as he holds out the staff in the power gesture! In 15.28 the gesturing *Icon* exacts maximum impact as the Staff Lady holds out her staff in the power gesture over the man below who acknowledges her presence and her divinity with the forehead gesture. Here the artist layers meaning by playing with duality to strengthen the visual impact as it doubles (or triples) the power of the deity depicted because the Staff Lady shares the personas of Epiphany Lady as the VIP appearing on high and Lion Lady as the Mistress of Animals. Gestures between mortals and between mortals and deities invite us into the society and into the supernatural world where polite exchange is the norm. In 15.29 and 15.30 we see the two *Icons* created specially to portray the meeting of mortal and deity: the VIP appearing on high and the VIP granting audience. Of

the six *Icons* comprising the cultscape in 15.31 we concentrate on two. The kneeling the boulder *Icon* has the ceremony here performed by a woman whereas it is performed by a man in 15.1 and 15.19. This image should be considered beside the pulling the tree *Icon* of 15.19 and 15.20. Each is a memorable statement of worship, the one a plea for preservation by a people living in a seismic land and the other a prayer for the pollination of tree and plant so that the food source for the coming year is secured. The final *Icon* in our summary is the human couple *Icon* set at the centrepiece of the cultscape in 15.31. The woman and the man are in a special relationship but they are not shown holding hands or giving the heart gesture. They meet contesting a bow in a one only image – and we are reminded again that there is much that we cannot explain in Aegean iconography.

Reviewing these thirty-two chosen *Icons* has not only memorably evidenced the range of iconography encompassed by Minoan seals; it has also clearly revealed the layered connectivity of images in the Minoan idiom. Having a standard vocabulary has enabled the iconography to be accurately described. Iconographic details of *Icons*, elements and syntax seamlessly refer to details across images, with never a discordant note. The whole iconography is constantly being called upon as each image comes into focus. It is this iconographic whole that the artist, the seal owner and the wider community shared in their consciousness, allowing them to read each image in all its pregnant richness. Some four thousand years later, we readers and researchers are attempting to share in these iconographic riches but the difficulties we face in understanding their meaning are immense.

The *Icon* is the memorable image that imprints the most important visuals in the viewer's mind. Through the layering of *Icons*, the Minoan seal artist has created a subtle, sophisticated and polyvalent iconography which is one of the great glories of the Aegean civilisation. The value of this book lies in giving an overview of the fifteen centuries of seal creativity, in presenting an integrated view of the art and iconography and in providing a guide to illuminate our sharing of the iconographic riches. Through their memorable and beautiful images the seals lay claim to being the pre-eminent source for understanding life as it was lived and imagined in Minoan Crete, Mycenaean Greece and the Aegean Islands in the Bronze Age. The seals emerge as the driving force for artistic creativity shaping all other media. They are prized possession, original iconography and seminal art.

Plates 15.1 to 15.31

The *Icon* Essence



gold signet



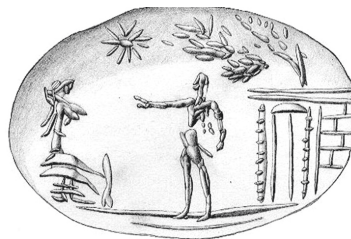
gold signet



sealing from a hard stone seal



15.1 – tree growing from rocky ground
(Sellopoulou Ring/LM I)



15.2 – celestial sign
(XI 28/LM I)



15.3 – spiraliform
(IV 140/MM II)



green jasper four sided prism



sealing fragment



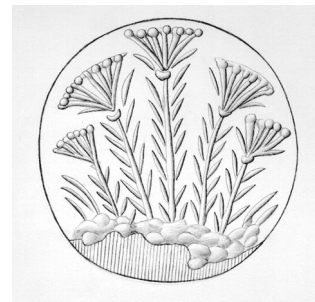
silver signet



15.4 – script sign
(II.2 316a/MM II)



15.5 – single flora
(II.8 9/EM III-MM IA)



15.6 – multiple flora
(VS 1A 46/MM III-LM I)

The *Icon* Essence



red and gold veined jasper discoid



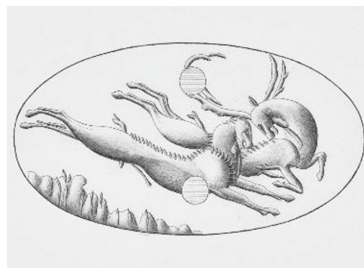
string sealing, from a convex oval metal seal bezel



string sealing from a lentoid of soft stone



15.7 – animal resting
(II.3 340/MM III-LM I)



15.8 – animal flying leap
(II.6 70/LM I)



15.9 – bird flying
(II.6 113/LM I)



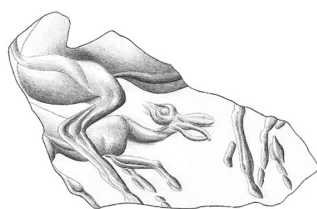
sealing from a signet of metal



orange carnelian lentoid



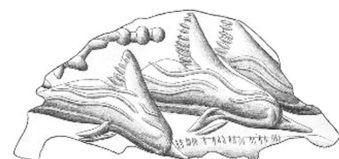
sealing from a seal of metal?



15.10 – animal caring for young
(II.8 508/LM I)



15.11 – animal crunching
(XI 42/LH I-LH II)



15.12 – dolphin leaping
(II.8 161/LM I)

The *Icon* Essence



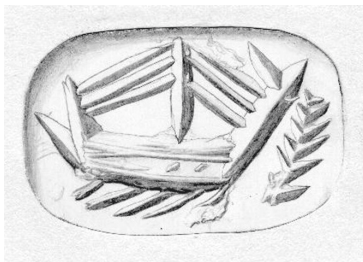
steatite three sided prism



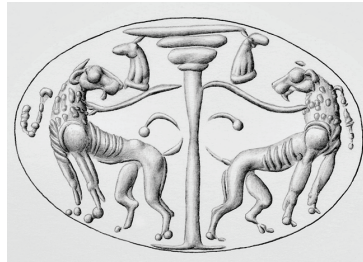
gold signet



gold signet



15.13 – sailing ship
(II.2 276b/MM II)



15.14 – animals at the grand pillar
(VI 364/LB I-LB II)



15.15 – hovering symbol
(II.3 51/LM I-LM II)



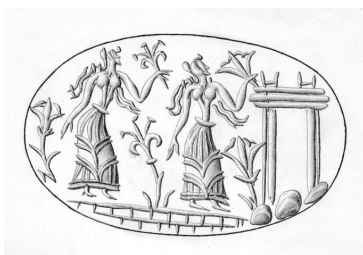
gold signet



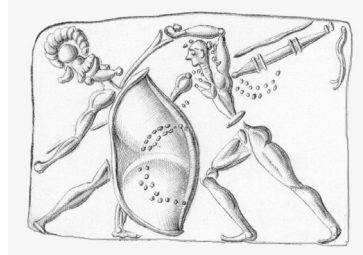
gold cushion



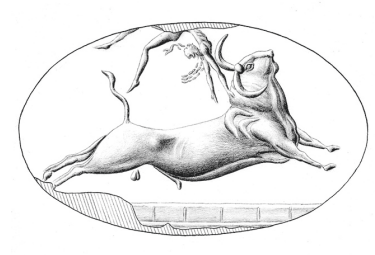
packet sealing from an oval metal ring bezel



15.16 – serving at the shrine
(VS 1B 113/LB I-LB II)



15.17 – war duelling
(I 11/LH I)



15.18 – leaper somersaulting
(VS 3 392/LM I)

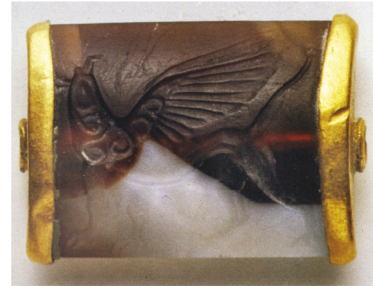
The *Icon* Essence



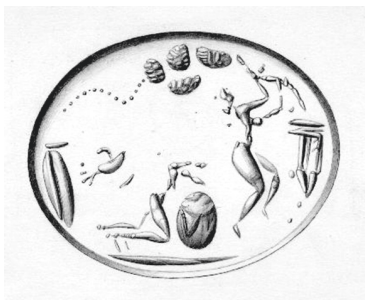
gold signet



gold signet



agate cushion with gold mounting



15.19 – beehive with bees
(II.3 114/LM I)



15.20 – pulling the tree
(I 219/LM I)



15.21 – animal standing
(I 271/LB I-LB II)



haematite? amygdaloid



black green schist cushion



haematite lentoid



15.22 – carrying the special object
(XI 35/LB I-LB II)



15.23 – hybrid woman
(III 367/LM I)



15.24 – hybrid man somersaulting
(III 363/LM I-LM II)

The *Icon* Essence



carnelian lentoid



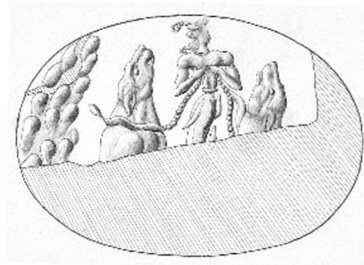
string sealing from an oval metal ring bezel



sealing from a metal? signet



15.25 – Mistress of Animals
(I 144/LB I-LB II)



15.26 – Master of Animals
(II.8 248/LM I?)



15.27 – VIP with familiar
(II.8 237/LM I)



string sealing from an oval metal ring bezel



gold signet



gold signet



15.28 – gesturing
(II.8 256/LM I)

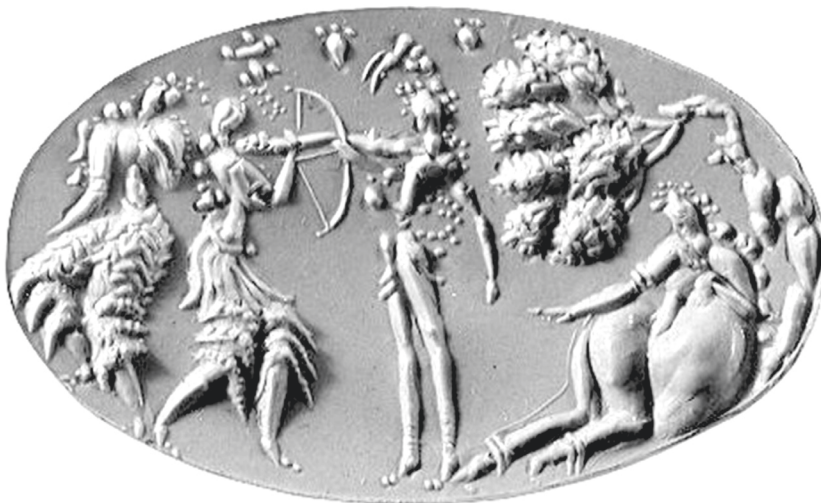


15.29 – VIP appearing on high
(VI 281/LM I)



15.30 – VIP granting audience
(II.3 103/LM I-LM II)

The *Icon* Essence



15.31 – human couple, meeting, gesturing, tree growing from rocky ground, kneeling the boulder, hovering symbol
(XI 29/LM I, bezel size 2.27 cm x 1.35 cm)

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Parameters for Creating the IconAegean Databases

There are ten Parameters which govern the creation of the IconAegean Databases.

1. The IconAegean Classification encompasses all seal, signet and sealing designs.

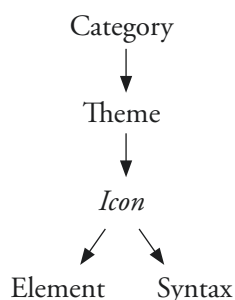
Even if there is only one example of the iconography it must be included, provided that it is a representation on a *bona fide* Aegean seal, signet or sealing. Insistence that the classification covers all designs ensures that discussions are firmly based on the whole of the material and not on only a few well-known pieces which may not even show the most characteristic features.

2. The IconAegean Classification is sourced only in seal designs.

Working only with the iconography of the seal designs provides an internally consistent classification and avoids circular arguments involving other artistic media. However, the Classification is applicable to designs in the other media because they partake in the same cultural identity and share the same artistic idiom.

3. The IconAegean Classification is set out in an Hierarchical Schema of 5 divisions.

These divisions are the 5 iconographic fields in the Databases named Category, Theme, *Icon*, Element and Syntax. This Hierarchical Schema comprises 4 levels, working down from Category to Theme to *Icon*, with Element and Syntax at the 4th level explaining the detail of the *Icon* which is the most important artistic division:



The Element and Syntax levels only describe detail that can be assessed across all the seals. In each IconAegean Database record the seal design is first classified by its main topic and then described by the Key Words of the standard IconAegean Vocabulary.

4. The IconAegean Classification classifies the images by working down the 4 schema levels.

For the first three levels the main subject matter is the sorting factor and is decided by assessing the *Icon* that shapes the image. At the first level of the Category division, the images are sorted by main topic into 10 general groupings like human figures and fauna. The order is humans first, followed by the fantastic, then the world of nature, then geometric designs and finally writing and miscellaneous. Then each of these Categories is sorted at a second level into Themes like bull sports and animal attack. The order within these is symbolic treatment followed by featured images, then peaceful to aggressive for humans and then animals, then floral and foliate, and finally geometric curvilinear to angular and text. Then the Themes are sorted at the third level into *Icons* like VIP with familiar and animal flying gallop. The order here is the same as that guiding the entries under Themes. Subsequently, the detail of the *Icon* is described at the fourth level in the Element and Syntax divisions. In the Element division the most important features are described first, moving down to subordinate detail. This usually entails discussing the Elements in the centre section first and then working out to the periphery. In the Syntax division the order is shape of seal face first, then a statement of the overall organisation of the design followed by any

special design effects and then descriptions of the syntactic relationships of the Elements handled in the same order as for the Element details.

5 The core of the IconAegean Classification is the *Icon* – the memorable image – compounded out of content and shape.

Creating with *Icons* is the compositional imperative of Aegean art. The *Icon* may be a simple bold design or it may be an involved image. A Theme may need a series of *Icons* to give it full expression. It is characteristic of Aegean art that there are a relatively small number of Themes which are regularly portrayed by the same *Icons*.

6 The IconAegean Classification recognises the importance of the *Icon* by designating an image as the Paradigm example (P).

This is the particularly detailed and finely worked seal design that gives the classic statement of the *Icon*. The term “Paradigm” conveys the sense of the most characteristic example and represents the fullest development of a type, rather than the first, and often therefore embryonic, example from which others have been developed.

7 The IconAegean Classification provides an IconAegean Dictionary which lists and defines all the 590 iconographic terms which comprise the standard IconAegean Vocabulary.

These 590 terms are set out in the IconADict Database as Key Words. They provide the basis for identifications across all the seals and the means of searching the databases on the iconographic data.

8 In the Databases the IMAGE accompanies the text in all presentations of the data.

The IconADict Database presents a defining image for each IconAegean Dictionary term. The accompanying text provides comparisons with other examples to show the full extent of the variations covered by the term. The defining image and comparison images are drawn from a selection of 1000 seal designs, being a subset of the total seal corpus, which examples all the iconography. The image provided is the CMS drawing of the seal impression (and where a CMS entry is not available because the seal is not yet published in the *CMS Volumes*, a drawing commissioned by the Author).

The IconAegean Database presents the CMS data as a one-page entry for each seal face image. At the top of the page, the image provided is the CMS drawing of the seal impression. Below this image the iconographic descriptions are set out, following the accepted procedure for discussing a seal design from the impression.

9 The IconAegean Classification chooses iconographic terms that are as objective as possible.

These Key Words are carefully defined in the IconAegean Dictionary in the IconADict Database. Interpretative, emotive, or anachronistic terms, even if they have a history of use in Aegean art discussions, are eschewed. Descriptive terms are employed instead.

10 The IconAegean Databases are to be user-friendly.

This Parameter guides decisions about entering the data in clear layouts, such as in the one-page entry for each seal face image in the IconAegean Database, as well as about handling the interrogation of the Databases and the retrieval of information from the fields by using defined Key Words. This user-friendly Parameter also applies to the creation of the IconAegean Classification. As far as possible, the iconographic terms are to be ordinary words (in English). Specialist terms are coined only when there is no common word available or no acceptable term already in the literature.

Appendix 2 IconAegean Vocabulary Terms

The 590 terms are listed alphabetically along with their field designation and their IAS number.

A

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B

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E

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M

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P

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R

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T

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U

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V

various I 125, **vase** E 153, **vessel** I 65, **vierpass spiral** E 301, **VIP** E 1, **VIP accepting homage** I 3, **VIP appearing on high** I 1, **VIP carrying the catch** I 10, **VIP driving the chariot** I 8, **VIP full figure** I 4, **VIP granting audience** I 2, **VIP in the grand boat** I 7, **VIP leading the prisoner** I 9, **VIP with familiar** I 5, **VIP with server** I 6,

W

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Z

zigzag E 317, **zweipass spiral** E 299.

Appendix 3 Print-out of the Entry for the Definition of VIP in the IconADict Database

IconADict

Dictionary

Key Word

VIP

Usage

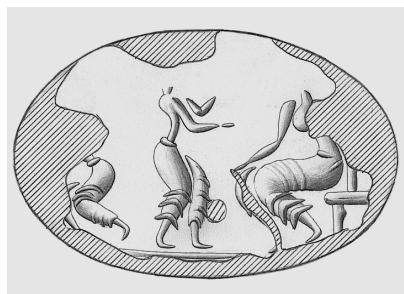
Vocabulary, **Element**

Example

IconADict Number
0299

CMS Number
CMS.II.7.8

IAS Number
E 001



Meaning

VIP is the abbreviation for Very Important Person and is used for any human figure which is depicted as important by one or more of the following 5 indicators:

- 1 the fantastic or the supra-normal: the figure interacts with a **fantastic creature**, or performs some feat not normal for human beings like flying through the air,
 - 2 size differential: the figure is of **large size** or **small size** in relation to other human figures in the scene,
 - 3 pose and position: the figure occupies a position in relation to some **special object** or special place or assumes a special pose,
 - 4 centre of attention: the figure is the recipient of the attention of other human figures,
 - 5 sole subject: the figure is the sole human figure in the design, usually as a **featured image**,
- here the seated figure is a VIP because she exhibits indicators 2, 3 and 4: she is of large size relative to the other figures, she is seated on a **tiered shrine** and a **server** comes towards her, in **0507** the figure is a VIP because she exhibits indicator 1: she is interacting with a fantastic creature, her **familiar**, note how she cuddles the **griffin** like a pet,
a female VIP is a **Lady** or a **Mistress**,
a male VIP is a **Lord** or a **Master**

Appendix 4 Print-out of the Classification of CMS I 223 in the IconAegean Database

IconAegean Data

Data View



IconAegean Classification

IconAegean Number 00223

Category human figures

IAS Number E 029

Theme symbolic

IconA Code 101.005

Icon VIP with familiar

Element VIP as Griffin Lord, wearing diagonal robe, griffin as familiar, wearing cord as collar and leash, three lines as groundline

Some
Element
Records
Incomplete

Syntax circle, focus, Lord front centre, standing profile to left, arm bent to waist holding cord tied into a collar around the griffin's neck, griffin back centre, statant to left, wings elevated, head erect regardant, groundline below

Some
Syntax
Records
Incomplete

Commentary impression and seal show that the hand holding the leash has been set on the wrist wrongly since the palm and curled fingers cannot be seen shown in this position when the arm is held across the body, the band and raised dot on his wrist shows he is wearing a seal but it is not shown in the drawing

Some
Commentary
Records
Incomplete

CMS Record

Some CMS Records Incomplete

CMS Number

CMS.I.223

Seal Form lentoid

Material Group hard stone

Material jasper, red

Provenance Vaphio, tholos, cist in chamber floor

Context Dating LH IIA

Stylistic Dating

LB I-LB II

Notes excavated Mainland, stone, red-orange

CMS Code 010.223

Appendix 5 Print-out of a Search on VIP granting audience in the Icon Field in the IconAegean Database, Comparison, 16 results

IconAegean Data

Comparison

IconAegean Number

00017

CMS Number

CMS.I.17



IconAegean Number

00101

CMS Number

CMS.I.101



IconAegean Number

00179

CMS Number

CMS.I.179

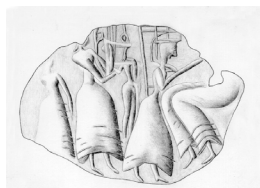


IconAegean Number

00361

CMS Number

CMS.I.361



IconAegean Number

01663

CMS Number

CMS.II.3.103

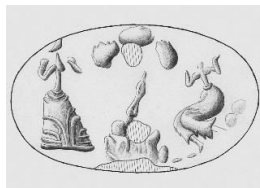


IconAegean Number

02521

CMS Number

CMS.II.6.5



IconAegean Number

02524

CMS Number

CMS.II.6.8

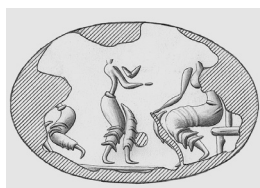


IconAegean Number

02813

CMS Number

CMS.II.7.8



Appendix 5 Print-out of a Search on VIP granting audience in the Icon Field in the IconAegean Database, Comparison, 16 results cont.

IconAegean Data

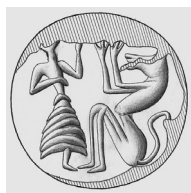
Comparison

IconAegean Number

02829

CMS Number

CMS.II.7.24



IconAegean Number

03329

CMS Number

CMS.II.8.262

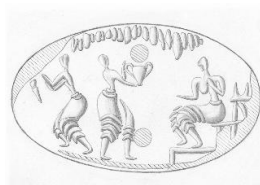


IconAegean Number

03335

CMS Number

CMS.II.8.268

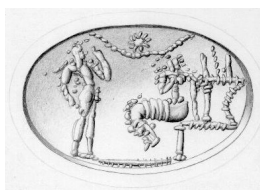


IconAegean Number

04803

CMS Number

CMS.V.199



IconAegean Number

05532

CMS Number

CMS.VS.1A.177



IconAegean Number

07132

CMS Number

CMS.VI.284



IconAegean Number

08274

CMS Number

CMS.X.261



IconAegean Number

08366

CMS Number

CMS.XI.30



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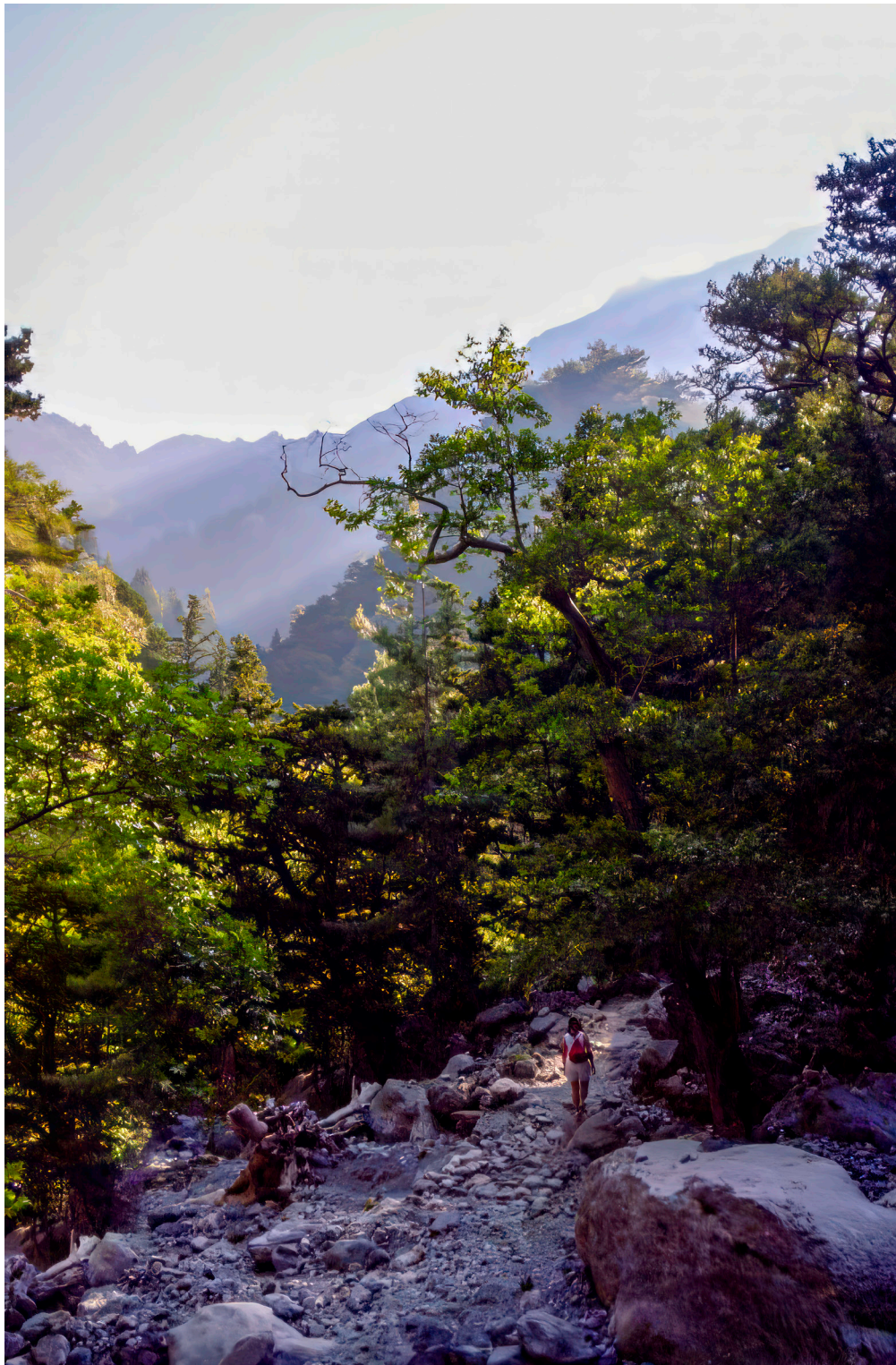
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Cretan Landscape

The ICON book is a revelation of the lives of the Aegean peoples drawn from the hands of their own artists. ICON presents the images that are carved or chased on Aegean seals and signets and interprets their meaning in the absence of accompanying deciphered texts. Throughout their long floruit, the seals give the most extensive illustrations of life as it was lived and imagined in Minoan Crete and Mycenaean Greece in the Bronze Age.

ICON, with its 1800 illustrations, is the first comprehensive iconographic analysis of the Aegean seal images. ICON describes and interprets the images through a dedicated vocabulary which recognizes their artistic innovations and celebrates the detail of their sophisticated, nuanced and polyvalent iconography.

Cover Image:
Gold Signet Ring
Minoan, c. 1500 BCE
Staatliche Museen, Berlin
Bezel 2.27 cm × 1.35 cm